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Living in the 'in-between' – narrating
identity, re-imagining home and
negotiating belonging: an ethnographic
investigation of the Iranian diaspora in
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

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Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

June 2017

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Abstract

Using concepts by Homi Bhabha (1994) such as 'hybridity', 'in-betweenes' and 'third space' the aim of this thesis is to investigate the tensions between identity, location, culture and belonging in an attempt to understand how Iranians who have moved to Newcastle upon Tyne renegotiate their cultural identity, and create a sense of home and belonging in a new space. A diasporic space, formed in the interstices between their re-imaginings of Iran as home (religious, cultural and national), and their desire to create a home in the UK. In order to explore these ideas further, this thesis used ethnography to access the members' everyday lives and conducted biographical interviews to gain an in-depth perspective on their lives in Iran, their decision to leave Iran, their process of migration and re-settlement in the UK.

This thesis will demonstrate that although post-modern concepts have moved away from fixed notions of diaspora and identity, towards notions of fluidity and renegotiation; the members of this Iranian community attempt to fix and essentialise their Iranian cultural identity in order to distance themselves from the Islamic Republic on the one hand, whilst embracing their cultural hybridity on the other.

Key Words: Diaspora, Iranian, Identity, Home, Belonging, In-betweenes, Third Space, Hybridity.

Taghdim be Pedare azizam

For My Dad

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my eternal gratitude to the members of the Iranian community whose participation made this thesis possible.

'Az jame-eye Iraniani ke dar in rah mara yari kardeh ta betavanam in projeh ra takmil nemodeh va be etmam beresanam kamal tashakor va ghahrdani ra dashte va besyar sepasgozaram'.

Some of you have known me since I was a young girl, some I met in my early teens and some I have met purely through the reach of this research. Regardless of this, you all took significant time and patience to share your personal stories with me and I thank you wholeheartedly for allowing me into your lives. I am beyond grateful. It is through your stories that I have learned a great deal about my own heritage, allowing me access to something I previously felt separate from. A very special thanks goes to my two gatekeepers Mehri and my dad, for assisting me in my understandings of Iranian culture, tradition and ritual as well as, for introducing me to the lovely people who participated within this research. Your help has been invaluable, and your continued support immeasurable.

Next I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Siobhan Holohan for her continuous support and irreplaceable guidance over the last five years. I owe the creation of this project to her and Dr Mark Featherstone as it was through their discussions that the idea for this thesis came to fruition. I first met Dr Holohan when she agreed to supervise my Masters dissertation and it was through her encouragement that I acquired the confidence to apply for a PhD in Sociology. She has always provided honest, insightful advice and above all, has consistently encouraged me to challenge myself. Most importantly she was always there for me when I felt lost...Which was often...I cannot count the amount of times she has prevented me from drowning in the murky depths of the PhD ocean! Thank you for shaping me into the academic I am today.

I must also personally thank Keele University for awarding me a Fee Waiver studentship as without it I would not have had the opportunity to continue my passion. Furthermore, I would like to express my thanks to the entire Sociology department, past and present for their support over the last eight years. If someone had told me at the age of eighteen that I would begin a PhD in Sociology at the age of twenty-five I would have laughed in their face. I initially came to Keele to study Psychology but due to the Dual Honours system I had to take another subject and so I randomly chose Sociology. In the first year of undergraduate I regretted this decision immediately because I just could not get my brain to adapt from thinking psychologically to sociologically. However, this all changed in second year when I took Dr Mark Featherstone's module 'Race, Nation and Class'. It was through the electives, which were based on the research of the lecturers that my sociological imagination was unleashed and my future career set in motion.

Next I must thank my amazing friends from Newcastle (upon Tyne) and Keele for keeping me sane throughout the last four years. I seriously could not have made it through without your help. You have all looked after me in some way and provided me with things to look forward to e.g. weddings, births, camping trips, birthday celebrations; these milestones have helped me to keep moving forward and particular gratitude goes to Steph, Ian, Laura, Kayleigh and Spike. A special mention also goes to Toby whose pragmatic approach to life has really

helped in the final stages of the thesis. Throughout the last couple of months, I have tried to live by his phrase 'at the end of the day, it gets dark' because no matter what I do or how much I do, this thesis will always feel unfinished.

Last but not least, I would like to give a most special thank you to my family: Mam, Dad, Ziba, Darius and Nicole. Words fail to express how thankful I am to you all. You have been there for me through the good times and the bad, the tough times and the pleasant, the tears and the laughter. You have also continuously supported me through my education and for all of this I am eternally grateful.

Chapter One: Introduction

Almost every power, race and community has its own view of Iran. Moreover, even Iranians themselves are so divided, whether in Iran or as part of the Iranian diaspora [...] every group, class and creed has a conception of the country and its history which are more or less at odds with the rest. Not only are there Islamist, non-Islamist, pre-Islamist, nationalist, democratic, patriotic, leftist, ethnic separatist forces and sentiments current among Iranians at home and abroad, but there is even greater variety of conceptions of Iran's past, present and future [...] and each one is held as absolute truth.

(Kantouzian, 2009:1)

Thesis Overview

Aims and Objectives

This quote from Homa Kantouzian's book *'The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran'* sets the precedent for this thesis. That identity is fluid, unbound, and decentred created in tensions between the self and its multiples. Using concepts by Homi Bhabha (1994) such as 'hybridity', 'in-betweens' and 'third space' (which are explored in chapter three) the aim of this thesis was to investigate the tensions between identity, location, culture and belonging in an attempt to understand how Iranians who have moved to Newcastle upon Tyne renegotiate their cultural identity, and create a sense of home and belonging in a new space. A diasporic space, formed in the interstices between their reimaginings of Iran as home (religious, cultural and national), and their desire to create a home in the UK. In order to explore these ideas further, this thesis used ethnography to access the members' everyday lives and their perceptions on the following objectives:

- Understanding of home and where they consider home.
- Connections to their homeland and family that remain there.

- Whether there is a sentimental link to the homeland which aids their adaptation to the UK.
- To what extent Iranian culture, traditions and rituals are maintained whilst integrating into UK society.
- How identity is (re)negotiated in the UK.
- To where they feel a sense of belonging.
- To what extent Iranians feel embedded into the British nation.

The focus of this thesis is mainly directed towards a long established group of first wave Iranian male migrants who arrived in Newcastle upon Tyne throughout the 1970s for western higher education. Their stay ended up becoming permanent due to the socio-political problems which arose in Iran during and after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and it is through their permanency that an Iranian diaspora was constructed in the Newcastle area. It is however further supplemented by the narratives of several Iranians, both male and female, arriving throughout a third wave of migration in the years 2000-2002. Their stories detail how they fit into the existing Iranian community, whilst other Iranians arriving throughout the same third wave of migration are excluded. The reasons for this focus will be discussed later in this introductory chapter when outlining existing literature on the Iranian diaspora, and then again more directly within the chapter on Methodology and Methods.

Thesis Argument

Stuart Hall (1992) argues that identity is created in connection with the cultural worlds which we are surrounded by, therefore with regards to Iranians living in Newcastle this thesis also asks, what happens when you move away from the cultural worlds in which you have grown up? the cultural worlds which you believe define who you are. According to Stock (2010) regardless of whether migrants are forced from their homeland or choose to leave their homeland, they experience a sense of dislocation of the self, arising from a loss of belonging. Iranians who now live in Newcastle have moved away from everything that they believe defines who they are; Iran is a home that they no longer physically belong to and whilst they may be physically situated in the host country they initially have no sense of belonging there

either. Stock (2010) argues that 'migrants' perceptions and dreams of home and belonging are driven by memories of prior homes and by notions of where 'we' came from. In order to renegotiate their identity upon moving to Newcastle, or as Gilroy (1993) states 'create routes', this thesis argues that Iranians (re)create roots by reimagining and reconstructing their idea of Iran as home in Newcastle, forming a diasporic space; an in-between space in which the tensions between identity, location, culture and belonging play out.

To explore these tensions, the findings from this ethnography will be separated into three thematic chapters (five, six and seven): Diaspora and the Search for Belonging; Hybridity and the Third Space: Renegotiating Identity in the 'In-betweens' and; Performing Identity: Reimagining Iran as Home in Newcastle. Chapter five provides a genealogy of the Newcastle Iranian diaspora focussing on its construction as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1994) based on their reimagining and memories of Iran as home. Chapter Six will explore the renegotiation of their cultural identity and how this was aided by the diaspora, the MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism, as well as their sentimental connections to their idea of Iran as home. Chapter seven is the final thematic chapter and will demonstrate the ways in which the members of this diaspora perform their identity by remaining connected to their idea of Iran as home through Persian material culture, tradition, ritual and culture. These chapters will be discussed again later in this chapter.

Research Rationale

The inspiration for this research stems from my memories and experiences with the Iranian community I have grown up alongside. I use the word alongside because although my father is Iranian, I have never been fully immersed into the Iranian way of life, the community itself or Iranian culture. I have mainly sat on the fringes of this community looking in and before I began this thesis I knew very little about the meanings behind Iranian cultural rituals and traditions. Furthermore, I had only visited Iran and my family residing there on two occasions, once as a child and the other as an adult. It was my trip as a 23-year-old adult which inspired this thesis as whilst I was there I found myself questioning and renegotiating my identity in order to adapt to this somewhat familiar but also extremely foreign culture and experience.

From this I began to wonder about the Iranian community I had grown up alongside. How was this community constructed and why? How had these Iranians felt whilst they settled into life in the UK? and what were the processes they went through whilst they renegotiated their identity in this new space?

Due to my intimate connections to the community being studied it was imperative that I provide my own biographical narrative to the thesis and the reasons for this are two-fold. The first reason is related to the chosen methodology of ethnography. In accordance with the reflexive turn of the 1990s, a researcher/ethnographer needs to position themselves within the research, be reflexive about their position within society and think about how their view of the world has been shaped through the social structures they have inhabited. The second reason is because my personal biography is deeply entwined with the Iranian community being studied. As I will go on to discuss at many points throughout this thesis, the Iranians within this community renegotiate their Iranian cultural identity in the tensions between their re-imaginings of Iran as home, and their desire to create a home in Newcastle upon Tyne. The diaspora is formed in this in-between space. Like these Iranians, I have lived and grown up in the folds of these cultures, formulating, like them, a hybridised identity that is both Iranian and British. Just as the biographical narratives of this Iranian community demonstrate the complexity of their identity renegotiation upon arriving in Newcastle upon Tyne, my biographical narrative woven into the methodology, and thematic analysis, demonstrates the processes I underwent in my own identity renegotiation within this community. For the majority of my life, I have always felt my two – ness (DuBois, 1989), that I am like fellow Iranians within this community, but at the same time, not quite (Bhabha, 1994). I am simultaneously an insider and an outsider. This thesis is as much about the renegotiation of their cultural identity and belonging, as it is my own, as we all try to find our place within the ‘in-betweens’.

At the time of my fieldwork, interest in Iran had again peaked since the conflict surrounding the 2009 presidential election which resulted in widespread media coverage about the potential for popular uprising since enacted across many parts of the Middle-Eastern and North-African region. Most prominent throughout my fieldwork was the increasing coverage of the Iranian government’s quest for nuclear power. Iran’s defiance of Security Council resolutions ordering

it to suspend all enrichment of uranium resulted in four UN security sanctions on Tehran and all financial transactions between Iran and the west were cut (BBC news, 10/01/2011). Iran states its interest in nuclear power is peaceful, however politicians across Europe and the USA remain concerned that Iran's nuclear power programme is dedicated to creating nuclear weapons. The Iranian government's interest in nuclear power placed Iran in the same light as terrorists: as a threat to the 'western' world. Therefore, the way in which Iran has recently been portrayed can be understood in terms of the discourse of '*othering*', a term coined by Edward Said (1968). In light of this, I was particularly interested in whether or not the West's conflict with their homeland would impact upon the renegotiation of their cultural identity in the UK. As such this thesis refers to academics such as Homi Bhabha, Sigmund Freud, Stuart Hall and Edward Said in order to unpack the discourse surrounding notions of identity, nation, culture and belonging.

Coupled with the fact that Iran is an Islamic state, the people of the Iranian diaspora could suffer from stigma associated with Islamophobia, which has been on the rise since 9/11 and 7/7 (Modood, 2007). In connection to notions of Islamophobia, in his speech on Islamic extremism at a conference in Munich in 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron said that multiculturalism has failed because it encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from the mainstream 'because we have allowed the weakening of our collective identity' (Cameron 2011, BBC News). This notion of a collective identity is referring to the British nation, a unifying notion of what it means to be British. However, as this thesis will demonstrate through its exploration of the Iranian diaspora and concepts such as 'hybridity', migrant communities are both part of mainstream society and a cultural community. Whilst they may gather together to celebrate certain traditions and rituals within their culture and/or religion, the Iranian community in Newcastle is very much embedded within British society. This can be seen through their businesses, through their interpretation of British culture and traditions or their involvement in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, Iranians within Newcastle do not live in a separate cluster in one specific area, they are sporadically located across the entire Tyne and Wear region in places such as South Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland,

Newcastle and Durham. Therefore, this diasporic community represents that which David Cameron claims has failed.

This research also occurs at a time when refugees and immigrants have seen increasingly negative media and political attention, including the 'go home' van campaign led by the UK Home Office and most recently the right wing responses to the 'European Migrant and/or Refugee Crisis'. Within the last six months Europe has seen a significant increase in the number of refugees risking their lives on the Mediterranean Sea to seek safety and asylum. Most of these refugees and migrants are from war torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, escaping death, destruction and extremism. However, they are portrayed by the British media, and the Home Office as a threat to 'British culture', a threat to the idea of the British Nation, and as a drain on British society choosing the UK for its benefits system. Although members of the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle have not come to the UK as a part of the European Refugee Crisis, there have been a significant number of Iranians who have come to the UK as refugees in search of a better life and more stable future. In 2004 Iran was the top nationality applying to the UK for asylum, accounting for 10% of all applications (Hakimzadeh, 2006). Such an increase in applications was related to escaping Iran's declining economy and the deteriorating human rights record under the Islamic Republic. Contrary to popular media portrayal of refugees Iranians come to the UK with the intention of finding work and supporting themselves. They did not want to be living off the UK government or benefits and disliked the process of asylum for this reason. The government's current position actually makes life for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers unduly uncomfortable and undermines wider initiatives aimed at promoting integration by breeding deprivation, division and jingoism.

Existing Literature

The Iranian diaspora is often perceived as a product of the Iranian Revolution in 1979, however research on the global Iranian diaspora has only really surfaced in the literature within the last fifteen years (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2013; Ghorashi, 2009). Such literature typically reflects the work within the wider field of diaspora focussing on dispersal, flight from

'home', the formation of new communities, maintenance of transnational networks and identity (re)construction. A significant portion of this research has taken place in America which hosts the largest Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles, California. However, as you will see in chapter two, at present there is very little research investigating the Iranian diaspora in the UK with almost all literature focussing on the Iranian diaspora in London. This thesis provides the first in-depth account of an unrepresented local Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne in the North East of England.

Previous research within the Iranian diaspora appears to have focussed on Iranians who migrated in the second wave, namely those who have escaped Iran because they were politically and actively involved in the Islamic Revolution in 1979, for example Sullivan (2000), Ghorashi (2003, 2005, 2007) and Kelley (1993). Whilst Sullivan (2000) focussed on presenting the narratives of politically active Iranians and their lives before, during and after the revolution, Ghorashi (2003) chose to focus on Iranian women who were politically active in the revolution who now live in the Netherlands; focussing on their identity renegotiation and understanding of home in exile. Kelley (1993) provided one of the first in-depth accounts of the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles, which is where most of the Iranians fleeing the Islamic Revolution moved to. Looking at community formation and identity renegotiation, Iranians living in LA were typically from the elite echelons of Iranian society including professionals such as actors, singers, entrepreneurs and officials, who left Iran with their extensive capital. As time went on they were closely followed by the middle classes escaping the Iran/Iraq war. An estimated one million Iranians left Iran in the wake of the Revolution and over half of those are believed to reside in LA. However, rather than focusing on those who were politically active in the Iranian revolution, my study of an Iranian diaspora provides another strand to the existing empirical literature by engaging with the voices from other waves of Iranian migrants. It will focus on those who came over in the first wave of migration for education and ended up staying in Newcastle due to the political and economic issues which arose in their homeland. As well as those from the third wave of migration who left Iran due to the economic and social instability which plagued Iranian society under the Islamic Republic.

Instability and insecurity were common words used by the members of the Newcastle Iranian diaspora to describe Iranian society. Due to the political and socio-economic underpinnings of the global Iranian diaspora and their waves of migration, it is important to understand the socio-political context in which these Iranians chose to leave Iran. It is therefore the purpose of this next section to provide a brief overview of Iran's political history over the last one hundred years. Whilst many see the Iranian diaspora as a product of the Iranian revolution, I argue that the Iranian revolution is only one part of the Iranian diaspora story. The constant instability of Iranian society under the control of absolute arbitrary rule provides a more complete picture.

A History of Instability and Insecurity in Iran

Absolute Arbitrary Rule

The global Iranian diaspora could also be seen as a culmination of the constant instability and insecurity which has plagued Iranian society throughout its entire history. Many Iranians within the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne, particularly those I interviewed from the third wave of migration (post 1995), said that they could no longer cope with the instability and insecurity of living in Iran. Kantouzian (2009) demonstrates that this instability and insecurity stems from the fact that rule in Iran has always been characterised by the arbitrary nature of power. Within Iran, rule was a product of Divine Grace (the *farr*) which means that the legitimacy of a ruler was not due to his belonging to the ruling dynasty, but came directly from God. Within this theory, the right to succession is not entrenched in custom or guaranteed by law; the ruler will be abandoned by God if he stops being just to his people and ultimately fall from grace. To be a just and legitimate ruler, the ruler must stamp out chaos and conflict, bring peace and stability to the land, and protect the realm from foreign powers. As the ruler's decline was due to his fall from grace, this meant that any rebel who succeeded in overthrowing the existing ruler would be presumed to have the *Farr*, Divine Grace, making him the next legitimate leader. This uncertainty of who would accede the throne often resulted in conflict, civil war and chaos among different claimants which meant that Iran's history was continuously plagued by the following cycle: absolute and arbitrary rule; weak arbitrary rule; revolution and then chaos which was usually followed by absolute and arbitrary rule.

This arbitrary government and the shah's (King's) position over and above society by virtue of grace meant that the state was not dependent on any social class. On the contrary social classes were short term categories and depended on the state for their status and fortune (Kantouzian, 2009). Whilst this may have surmounted in extraordinary power, it was also the main source of the state's vulnerability. This is because it could seldom count on the support of its people, even the privileged classes, and this usually made the state insecure and fearful of losing its grip causing it to reinforce absolute rule and ruthless control methods. This has been witnessed time and time again in Iranian history, most recently seen in the 2009 Presidential Election. All of this resulted in personal, as well as social unpredictability and insecurity which led to what Kantouzian (2009) refers to as the 'Short Term Society'.

The Short Term Society

Although Iran has had a long and eventful history, it has always lacked long term continuity. It has instead consisted of a series of short terms. Due to the nature of arbitrary power and the constant cycle of change in power, a minister, governor or official knew he could lose his post at any moment should the current regime fall. For example since the Cultural Revolution of 1906 which was the onset of the first modern constitution in Iran there have been four Monarchs (all overthrown), seventy nine Prime Ministers (the position was abolished in 1989), two Supreme Leaders of the Islamic Republic and since 1980 there have been seven Presidents of the Islamic Republic. Such inconsistency in power has meant that there were seldom any decisions made on the basis of long term consideration, for example, investment horizons did not normally go beyond two years. Therefore, long term accumulation of capital was impossible (Kantouzian, 2009). This means that Iranian history and thus Iranian society has always lacked stability and security and been subject to extreme changes. One of my respondents who owned a construction company told me the following story of how this short term society directly impacts the Iranian people:

I'm just living in society and the politics is part of my life, especially in Iran because in here (UK) the politics is just for politician and the people just living normal daily life, but in my country the politics and the daily life is a stick

together because for example the President is change, that's the election time everything in my country is change. Before election (indicates upwards), after election (indicates downwards) everything is changed and that's effect in my daily life. In UK everything is the same, like everything in the a straight line, but in my country up, down, up, down - it's very sharp down and sharp up, so sometimes just everything maybe quickly change in one minute. I want to just tell you how these politics effect to the people, the daily living of the people. I want to compare before the ending of the war and after that.

One of my close friends, he got a company selling the beam, for the construction and it's always in my project. I just ask him to provide the beam and all the steel and then in the end of the month I just go how much do I owe you? After the war his life completely changed. He had lots of units, big store rooms full of the steel when the exchange of the dollar fell in my country [which meant] that the value of the steel changed, it did not drop slowly slowly, it was immediate and then he was bankrupt – Kaveh, Newcastle upon Tyne 2012.

Such stories were prominent within the biographical interviews with respondents, with almost all describing Iran as an insecure country which lacks opportunities and stable future. In order to provide some context to this thesis and the study of an Iranian diaspora in Newcastle, I must first highlight some prominent Iranian historical events. This will not only shed light on the impacts of modern arbitrary rule upon Iranian society, but also its participation in the creation of the global Iranian diaspora. Furthermore, we will be able to explore the tensions between Iran as a secular society and Iran as an Islamic society, which is a major theme that plays out within the renegotiation of Iranian cultural identity in diaspora. We will begin this journey by regarding the rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi, Iran's most forceful Western-Style moderniser.

Reza Shah Pahlavi - 1926-1941

Western style reforms were already underway before Reza Shah Pahlavi came to the throne, which are in part due to Iran's increased contact with the West in the nineteenth century. Iranian leaders and thinkers generally believed that change in Iran had to occur according to

modern western models (Keddie, 2003), in order to rid Iranian society from constant cycles of chaos and absolute arbitrary rule. This was the hope for the 1906-1907 Constitutional Revolution, a set of fundamental laws which defined the limits of executive power, laying down rules and procedures, as well as detailed rights and obligations of the state and society. A belief that once a government based in law was established, it could bring order to society (Kantouzian, 2009). It was throughout the constitutional revolution that modern concepts of nation-hood and nationalism began to emerge among a very small elite,

The emerging modern nationalists believed in Iran's superiority, not only on account of its real and imagined ancient glories but even more so because, as Aryan people, it belonged to the western European race which had created the great social and scientific civilisation that was contemporary Europe (Kantouzian, 2009:194).

Nationalist intellectuals believed Iran's 'failure' to see the same achievements in modernisation as its counterparts in Europe, were solely due to the Arabs and Islam (Kantouzian, 2009). The main aims of the Cultural Revolution were to remove arbitrary rule; centralise the state; separate religion and politics; and modernise Iran (from feudalism) e.g. introduce modern education, modern transport facilities and so forth. Whilst the latter came to fruition, arbitrary rule was not so easily dismissed.

Reza Khan came to power after a period of weak arbitrary rule in which Iran had succumbed to chaos once again (for a more complete history on absolute arbitrary rule see Kantouzian, 2009). Ali Shah Qajar was seen as a weak, corrupt and incompetent ruler who had failed to protect Iran from foreign intervention, for example submitting to the British, Ottoman and Russian occupation of Iran after World War I. Under the Qajar dynasty Persia was also marked by despotism, nepotism and tribalism, as well as political and military weakness for which they relied heavily on Britain and Russia. On 21st February 1921 Reza Khan, the de facto Commander of the Persian Cossacks marched 2,500 of his troops into Tehran where they were met without opposition and granted permission by the Shah Ali Qajar to set up a new government. Reza Khan was named *Sardar-e Sepah* (Commander of the Army) but within a few months his position was enhanced to Minister for War. By 1923 he was made

Prime Minister whilst the Shah Ali Qajar went on what was to be an extended holiday to Europe and in 1925 Reza Khan changed his surname to Pahlavi which resonated with the nationalists as it was the name of the Middle Persian language of pre-Islamic times. Shortly after, the Majles (Iranian Parliament) deposed the Shah Ali Qajar, due to his (fall from grace) inability to lead the country and by early 1926 Reza Pahlavi was crowned as the new Shah, and thus believed to have divine grace. In keeping with the theory of divine grace, Reza Pahlavi's aims were to control the country, to develop it so it could be independent from foreign intervention, to modernise it so it could deal with great powers on an equal basis and to have a strong army to resist foreign intervention and maintain order internally.

Components of the Shah's reform programme included improved communication networks, Iran's first railroad, a modern judiciary, a national registry for documents and property, a national educational system of state run elementary and secondary schools, Iran's first university and a system of public healthcare. He also established a unified army under his command which stamped out chaos within society, all of which was achieved within rapid succession. Most important in all of Reza Shah's reforms was the creation of a unified Iranian national identity.

In order to separate religion from politics, as well as improve the image of Iran in the west as a secular, superior country, Reza Shah changed the country's name from Persia to Iran and provided Iran with a national identity that linked modern Iranians to the mythicized origins of the 'Aryan Race' through an unbroken chain of monarchy. The Shah deliberately identified Iran with pre-Islamic symbols and glorified achievements of the ancient imperial Persian Empire, and denounced Iran's Islamic heritage by blaming the Arab invasion for the loss of Persia's 'superior culture'. This modern discourse of national identity was therefore pitted against a 'backward' and 'traditionalist' Islam (Gholami, 2015). This resonated with the nationalist elite and created a new secular, reformist, national political culture which replaced Islam as the state's main source of legitimacy¹. The hijab was outlawed, the activities and power of the clergy were restricted, alcohol was made legal and Iranian society were enforced

¹ This form of nationalism would go on to permeate Iranian society long after Reza Shah's rule, both domestic and diasporic (See chapter two and five).

to wear western style dress. Reza Shah was 'cast as the resolute, heroic king who had risen from the people to institute this unification after an irresponsible and weary Qajar Dynasty had left the country in disarray' (Gholami, 2015:165).

Members of the Newcastle Iranian diaspora described Reza Shah as a great leader who vastly improved his country and provided his people with a better way of life. However due to the nature of absolute and arbitrary rule, as time went on he became more paranoid about maintaining his power and wealth which led him to become increasingly distanced from his people. For example, he began exerting more control on society, such as censoring of the media and the banning of independent political parties. The Shah also accumulated a vast personal fortune through coercion or by confiscating land and patents. Meanwhile Iranian society was experiencing a widening gap in socioeconomic inequality. By the early 1940s the Shah was disliked by most social classes so when he was forced to abdicate after Iran was invaded by Britain and Russia², Iranian society perceived this as his fall from grace. However, with the fall of a powerful regime came the cycle of chaos and societal decline as another short term society came into place, namely his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi who was placed in power at the hands of the Allied Forces.

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi 1941 - 1979

Mohammad Reza Shah's rule can be divided into two parts: 1941-1953 which is understood as a period of turmoil, chaos and democratic experiment which ended with the 1953 coup; and 1953-1979 which is described as his dictatorship which ended with the 1979 revolution. The last twelve years of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign is often perceived as one of absolute arbitrary rule however, his entire reign relied heavily on the interference and/or support from the West, primarily America and Britain.

When Mohammad Reza Shah came to the throne this shift in power enabled the establishment of several political parties and amongst these was the National Front led by Dr Mohammad Mossadeq. With a large support Mossadeq was elected as Iran's prime minister in 1951 and within this role he managed to suppress the powers of the Shah and nationalise the

² On 25th August 1941 Russia and Britain invaded Iran after Reza Shah refused to allow the allied forces to use Iran for means of transporting war supplies (Keddie, 2003).

Iranian oil industry, thereby angering Britain and the USA who then inspired the CIA orchestrated coup d'état of 1953. The coup overthrew Mossadeq's government and reinstated Mohammad Reza Shah as the sole orchestrator of political power in Iran, as he was more suited to their needs and this once again gave the West unlimited access to Iranian oil.

Upon his return the Shah expanded the security agencies developed under his father to suppress his opponents and Iran became an autocracy once again. One of these security agencies was the secret police organisation SAVAK which was the result of British and American intelligence input. Mohammad Reza Shah also continued his father's policy of reform and development focussing on the country's infrastructure initiating a series of reforms aimed at rural development and modernisation, as well as health and education which were marketed under the title 'The White Revolution' of 1962. However, the consequences of these reforms included rampant inflation and extreme socioeconomic inequality which privileged the elite. As the country's oil export revenues prospered creating a sudden change in Iranian society from traditionalism to modernisation, middle and upper class families became motivated to send their children abroad for higher education in order to ensure socioeconomic security upon their return. By 1977 around 100,000 Iranians were studying abroad, of whom approximately 36,000 were enrolled in US institutes. The rest chose to study in the United Kingdom, West Germany, France and Italy. This signalled the first wave of migration from Iran to the west. Students abroad increased exponentially by 1979-1980 with around 51,000 Iranians studying in the U.S (Kelly, 1993), many of which never returned to Iran. Meanwhile the Shah enjoyed lavish and indulgent celebrations in the name of the nationalism created by his father³, and fancied himself as a modern day Cyrus the Great. But instead of unifying Iranians, the Shah's notion of nationalism and rampant Westernisation or 'west-toxification' (Mottahedeh, 1986:296) lead to increased alienation for a large proportion of Iranians. In light of this, Iranian people began to call for a turn to 'true' or 'authentic' Iranian-ness by way of Shiism. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was a revolt by the whole of Iranian society against

³ Between October 12th -16th 1971 at the ancient city of Perspolis, near Shiraz, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi hosted a series of lavish set of festivities costing in excess of \$17 million to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the foundation of the Persian Empire. The intent was to demonstrate Iran's long history and showcase contemporary advancements under Mohammad Reza Shah (Keddie, 2003).

both the Shah's arbitrary rule and his modernist westernism. Kantouzian (2009) argues that since the 1906 Cultural Revolution whenever the state was identified with Islam and traditionalism, society identified itself with a reinvented modern concept of pre-Islamic Persia; and whenever the state assumed the latter identity, society looked to Islam and Shia traditions. As you will see in chapter two and five, this tension still plays out within the global Iranian diaspora today.

The Iranian Revolution and the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran

An Ironic allegiance was formed between intellectuals who rejected western economic domination, and the religious opposition who objected to westernisation for cultural and religious reasons (Kelly, 1993). Furthermore, after President Carter criticised the Shah for an appalling Human Rights record, the Shah freed many political prisoners and relinquished censorship. However instead of appeasing Iranian society, it only heightened the protests. This, coupled with an article ridiculing the now very well-known and respected Ayatollah Khomeini in a government controlled daily newspaper - *Ettelaat* - in Tehran, paved the way for the downfall of the Pahlavi era. Subsequent riots in Qom and other cities began the cycle of protests that empowered the revolutionary forces. The most notable of such protests occurred on September 7th 1978, known as 'Black Friday', when government troops fired on thousands of 'peaceful' demonstrators violating martial law at Jaleh Square in Tehran (Kelly, 1993). This was the final nail in the coffin for Iranian society as Mohammad Reza Shah 'fell from grace', strikes in the public sector, oil industry, customs department, post office, factories, banks and newspaper soon followed. After hundreds of thousands of Iranians marched in Tehran in support of Khomeini calling for an Islamic Republic, there was little the Shah could do to appease or control the masses at this stage, so he left Iran in January of 1979 travelling from country to country seeking temporary residence.

Ten days after the Shah departed, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned from exile⁴ to be greeted by millions of Iranians in the street chanting 'Khomeini O Imam, we salute you, peace

⁴ Ayatollah Khomeini was exiled from Iran in 1964 for opposing the Shah's 'White Revolution' reforms. He initially sought refuge in Turkey before moving to the Holy Shia city of Najaf, Iraq. Khomeini stayed in Najaf

be upon you' (Kelly, 1993). In Shia context an *Imam* is the leader of the community chosen by God as the perfect example of faith to guide humanity in all aspects of life. Khomeini was therefore not just the leader of the revolution; he became semi divine and thought of as a saviour to the Iranian people, much like the concept of Divine Grace (*The Farr*).

At the time the revolution was seen as a widespread revolt for freedom, independence, democracy and social justice; a unifying aim of overthrowing the Shah however what prevailed was actually another form of absolute arbitrary rule. In the first two years after the revolution Iranian politics went through a transitional period typically characterised by power struggles between opposing political parties. In a referendum on March 31st the majority of Iranians – both men and women, rich and poor, modern and traditionalist – voted for the creation of the Islamic Republic (Kantouzian, 2009). However, it soon became clear that the clergy would secure its power base by any means necessary in a bid to stamp out chaos. Next began the dismantling of the previous state, removing all nationalist ideologies promoted by the Shah, as well as the systematic punishment of those associated with the former regime. Many royalists, Marxists, military and civilian officials were executed for their connection to the previous state, as well as their political orientation. As the regime embarked on a mission to remove any opposition, what followed was the systematic shut down and control of society: Newspapers were shut down; universities were closed and academics forced out of their positions, and when the universities finally did reopen they were placed under heavy surveillance in a bid to prevent any uprisings (Axworthy, 2006). Within a few years the Islamist regime had literally killed, imprisoned, or exiled most of its oppositional forces and replaced Iranian pre-Islamic nationalism, with an Islamic national identity and culture; once again subjecting Iranian society to rapid change and another series of short terms.

The Iran-Iraq War 1980 - 1988

The mass exodus of an estimated one million people in the years following the Iranian Revolution is perceived as the founding of the global Iranian diaspora. This large exodus can be divided into two groups. The first comprises of those Iranians associated with the Shah's

until 1978 when he was urged to leave. He spent the last four months of his exile in France before returning to Iran to found the Islamic Republic of Iran (Keddie, 2003).

regime in Iran, namely the 'royalists'. 'They left Iran with their extensive accumulated capital when the political situation became uncertain' (Ghorashi, 2005:200) and were generally considered to be professionals, entrepreneurs and academics from middle to upper class backgrounds. The second group, which makes up the largest Iranian emigration did not leave Iran until after 1980. This group was much more heterogeneous than the first group, varying in class, religion, education and political ideology (Ghorashi, 2009). Their reasons for leaving Iran were linked to the hardship and persecution they endured as a result of the revolution, as well as young men avoiding military service/the war and young women escaping confining gender constrictions (Hakimzadeh, 2006). With the introduction of the Islamic Regime, came the re-introduction of the Hijab and diminishing rights for women.

The Iran/Iraq war is commonly known as one of the longest, bloodiest and costliest Third World conflicts of the twentieth century, costing Iran a loss of \$500 billion which severely damaged their already floundering economy. Perceiving Iran as weak and unstable after the Islamic revolution, President Saddam Hussein invaded Iran on 23rd September 1980 with the intention of becoming the leading country of the Middle East (Axworthy, 2006). However, Iraq misperceived Iran's weakness and what ensued were eight long years of war, with countless rejected ceasefires and thousands upon thousands of deaths and casualties. As it stands today, Iran has one of the youngest populations in the world with 26.1% of the population aged between 0-14, 74% aged 15-64 and only 4.9% 65 and over (Keddie, 2003). In 2012 more than half of the Iranian population were under 35 years of age. It could be argued that this young population is due in large to the loss of civilians from the war, as well as, the mass migration which ensued with the fallout of the Iranian revolution.

One of the most significant impacts of the war was the distraction it provided. Like the American embassy hostage crisis⁵, the war served as an opportunity to strengthen revolutionary ardour and revolutionary groups. As the nation of Iran was absorbed with the fear of war, the Islamic Republic was able to permeate all corners of society without much

⁵ Help to pass the constitution, suppress moderates and radicalize the revolution was provided on 4th November 1979 when a group of students who supported the Iranian revolution hijacked the American Embassy in Tehran capturing 52 hostages, holding them prisoner for 444 days. The hostage crisis was a reaction to the U.S harbouring the former Shah (Keddie 2003: Kelly, 1993).

disturbance. By the time Iranians were aware of the impact of the Islamic Republic's agenda, it was already cemented into everyday life.

It is important to note that those members of the first and second waves of migration did not believe their departure would be permanent. Many considered their sojourn temporary and fully believed they would return to Iran when, not if, the Islamic regime fell. With the onset of the war they believed its downfall would occur once the war was over. When the war ended but the regime remained in power they believed the regime would not exist after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini (Spellman, 2004). However, once the Islamic regime remained in place after Khomeini's death, Iranians abroad realised that their stay in the host country would be permanent rather than temporary. In that time many of these Iranians had already created a life for themselves in the host country but desired institutions which catered to their religious and cultural needs.

Outline of Thematic Findings Chapters

The reason why it was important to discuss the political history of Iran over the last hundred years is because these tensions between society and absolute rule, between Persian nationalism and Islamic republic nationalism still play out within the diaspora. Within chapter five 'Diaspora and the Search for Belonging', I outline how the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne was constructed as a nostalgic representation of pre-Islamic Iran throughout the 1980s, representing an Iran lost in time and space. This Iran is based on the Persian Nationalism promoted by Reza Shah Pahlavi and his son Mohammad Shah Pahlavi. This could be seen as a reaction against the Iranian state, as I mentioned earlier, when the state was identified with Islam and traditionalism, society identified itself with a reinvented modern concept of pre-Islamic Persia. This idea of Iran as home is reimagined and reconstructed within Newcastle providing Iranians with an arena in which to create a sense of home and belonging in the UK. This ultimately enabled them to renegotiate their cultural identity; creating something hybrid 'in-between' difference. However, although identity is seen as a fluid concept (explored in chapter three) the members of this Iranian community in Newcastle attempted to

fix or essentialise the identity of their diaspora; their image of Iran as home and; what it means to be an Iranian, in order to have a stable cultural identity and distance themselves from the Islamic Republic. This fixity became apparent in their discussions of the third wave migrants known as 'Khomeini's Kids' who they describe as a 'different type' of Iranian whose 'mentality' they could not connect with. Hakimzadeh (2006) identifies this third wave of migrants as leaving Iran between 1995 and the present day. This wave can be separated into two groups: 1) a continuation of previous waves with highly skilled individuals leaving universities and research institutions, and 2) for the first time, a considerable number of labour migrants and economic migrants from working class backgrounds. Unlike the two previous waves, this wave was caused by Iran's economic crisis, deteriorating human rights record, surveillance of everyday life and diminishing opportunities.

This finding is theoretically significant because it contradicts contemporary conceptual understandings of diaspora and identity which have moved away from holistic, fixed, and stable notions of self. Therefore, in order to understand why Iranians living in Newcastle attempt to fix their identity, this thesis turned to the work of post-colonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Psychoanalysts such as Jacques Lacan to provide a more comprehensive analysis of Iranian identity renegotiation (see below).

Using Freudian concepts of the split self, the stereotype and the fetish which I explore in chapter three, I argue that the Iranian diaspora is a fetish which allows the first wave Iranians to deny the loss of their homeland in Newcastle. However, this is not a loss relating to their inability to return to the homeland in the sense of the Jewish Diaspora (explored in chapter two), it is rather a loss to their Persian culture and history with the creation of the Islamic Republic. In order to maintain this fetish, the diaspora is a stereotype which represents an Iran now lost in time or space; this Iran remains only in the past, lodged in the memories, rituals and habitus of its former residents. However, the presence of this 'different type' of Iranian confronts the identity of the diaspora (based on pre-Islamic Iran) causing it to waiver, revealing its split self. This led to an intergenerational conflict over the authenticity of what it means to be an Iranian, and how Iran as home is perceived, with the first wave completely distancing

themselves from those known as 'Khomeini's kids'. This resulted in the fragmentation of the once perceived 'cohesive' diaspora, into smaller sub communities based on differing loyalties and friendships.

The next thematic chapter, 'Hybridity and the Third Space: Narrating Identity in the 'In-betweens'', will focus on a fragment of this Iranian diaspora who are centred around their membership to the Maktab Tarighat Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism. Whilst 'Diaspora and the Search for Belonging' discusses the ways in which Iranians have attempted to fix and essentialise their Iranian cultural identity, and the identity of the diaspora based on their idea of Iran as home; this chapter - as the title suggests – will discuss diaspora and cultural identity as a product of hybridity. It will begin by demonstrating how the diaspora is an example of what Bhabha terms the 'third space', something created 'in-between' culture and I argue this third space is created in the tensions 'between' their re-imaginings of Iran as home and their home in Newcastle. With the fragmentation of the once perceived 'cohesive' Iranian community, new spaces and searches for a sense of belonging opened up, and this coincided with the arrival of the MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism to the region. Through the MTO Shahmaghsoudi a new sense of community was created which fits in with their holistic images of Iran as home and their desire to feel a sense of home and belonging in Newcastle. The MTO is a space where multiple identities intersect to create something new in-between their differences. It encourages the maintenance of Persian culture, tradition and ritual in the UK, whilst also promoting a space in which their Iranian cultural identity (based on pre-Islamic Iran) can coincide with an Islamic identity. Instead of being constructed in its opposition. It is a Persian nationalist Sufi group which helps them to renegotiate their identity in the tensions between location, culture and belonging, as they attempt to live as Islamic British Iranians within the UK.

With the help of visual methods such as photographs the aim of the final chapter 'Living in the In-Betweens: Re-imagining Iran as home in Newcastle and the Performance of Identity' was to compliment and conclude the findings from the previous two chapters by visually demonstrating the members' orientations to home, and present the ways in which they remain

connected to their idea of Iran as home whilst creating a home in Newcastle. It will present the ways in which Iranians from this fragment of the diaspora remember, reimagine and reconstruct Iran as home through their maintenance of Iranian tradition, culture and ritual, as well as their use of Persian material culture to decorate their homes. By focussing on the ways in which these Iranian lived their everyday lives within the in-betweens of culture, location and belonging, it will capture the fluidity and hybridity of their identity as it is performed in the banal minutiae of everyday life.

Theoretical Conceptual Framework

The Iranian diaspora in Newcastle provides an interesting theoretical dilemma for contemporary conceptual understandings of diaspora. On the one hand they essentialise their Iranian cultural identity in order to distance themselves from the Islamic Republic. Yet, on the other they embrace and recognise their hybrid identities and cosmopolitan outlook. This goes against contemporary understandings of diaspora and identity theory. As will be outlined in the theoretical conceptual framework, with the postmodern turn, contemporary diaspora theory moved away from a unitary, fixed focus on homeland origins and began to privilege hybridity and heterogeneity. Diaspora is therefore understood through interconnections, movement and multiple positionings. The Iranian diaspora in Newcastle seems to occupy an 'in-between' space between fixity and fragmentation. It is therefore my opinion that Diaspora as a concept is unable to fully explain the complexity of the re-negotiation processes Iranians undergo within the Newcastle diaspora. It is for this reason that I have turned to Post-Colonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha who rely on the pioneering work of Psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, to analyse the construction and re-negotiation of the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle. It is only through concepts such as the split self, stereotype, phobia, fetish, imaginary and the mirror stage that we can fully understand why Iranians fix their Iranian cultural identity on the one hand, whilst embracing hybridity on the other. This is theoretically significant because to my knowledge this is the only study which has used post-colonial and psychoanalytical concepts to explore diaspora and diasporic cultural identity.

The aim of the next chapter is to provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the global Iranian diaspora by introducing research completed within the US, Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, and Canada before narrowing down into the research which has taken place within the UK. Through this research I will outline common themes found within the wider field of diaspora studies including dispersal, community formation, waves of migration, identity renegotiation and maintenance of transnational networks. It will also touch on themes of home, belonging, loss, nostalgia and national identity.

Chapter Two: The Global Iranian Diaspora

Introduction

Considering the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was one of the focal reasons for the upheaval of Iranians from their homeland, the existence of an Iranian Diaspora has only surfaced in the literature within the last fifteen years (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2013; Ghorashi, 2009). Such literature reflects the work within the wider field of diaspora focussing on dispersal, flight from 'home', the formation of new communities, maintenance of transnational networks and identity (re)construction (Sullivan, 2001; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2013; Graham and Khosravi, Ghorashi, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2011), which will be the focus of this chapter. Typically, the Iranian diaspora has been characterised by themes of loss, trauma and exilic longing due to the turmoil of the revolution and displacement of millions of Iranians (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2013) which is similar to the classic diaspora literature on Jewish exiles. However, the growth of the Iranian diaspora can also be contextualised within the era of globalisation in which the flux, fluidity and movement of populations has had a profound shift on how we conceptualise and understand cultural identity.

As it is a relatively recent diaspora, especially when comparing to the classical Jewish diaspora, there are few exact statistics which reveal how many Iranians have migrated from Iran. It is estimated that this figure lies anywhere between 1-6 million people (Aidani, 2010; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2013; Ghorashi, 2003, 2005, 2007) with diaspora communities spread out across Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and North America. Most official records maintain a lower figure of Iranian migrants, whilst Iranians residing in the diaspora argue that the numbers are actually much higher. For example, in her research on the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles, Ghorashi (2009) found residents believed approximately 1 million Iranians lived in in the US, however as you can see from the table below, the US office of immigration data

reveals that approximately 490,000 Iranians reside in the US as of 2013. Most official data sources are unlikely to capture the full size of their Iranian communities because such sources e.g. census data does not include those who are awaiting their 'right to remain' status or those living illegally (Ghorashi, 2005). Furthermore, depending on whether the census data is categorised by 'place of birth' or 'nationality', it may fail to take into account those Iranians who were born in the host country or elsewhere outside of Iran.

Table 1: Iranian immigrants admitted to the USA, Canada, Germany, Sweden and UK 1961-2013

	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981- 1990	1991- 2000	2001-2010	2011-2013	Total
USA	10,291	46,152	154,857	112,597	125,930	40,601	490,428
Germany	7,298*	14,173	67,022	24,131	10,583	15,932	139,139
Canada	620	3,455	20,700	41,329	66,457	26,303	158,864
Sweden	384	3,249	38,167	16,804	18,597	9,466	86,667
UK	---	---	--	12,665	23,477	6,549	42,691

Sources: Canadian Government department of Citizenship and Immigration; USA Office of Immigration statistics; Sweden Statistical database for Immigration; Germany Office of Statistics and; UK Home Office. *No data for 1961.

Waves of Migration

Official statistics and research on the global Iranian diaspora reveals that there have been three distinct waves of Iranian migrants leaving Iran which correspond with Iran's changing socio-economic and political situation. The first wave which occurred between 1950 and 1979, mainly comprised of middle-upper class individuals whose family had sent them abroad (typically to the US and UK) for higher education. This was triggered by the resumption of oil production after the Second World War, as Iran's economy slowly recovered. It was also a time when diplomatic relations between Iran and the west were at their best, with the Shah of Iran openly encouraging students of Iran to seek education in the West. However, due to the onset of the Iranian revolution many of these individuals did not return to Iran, leading the country to suffer from 'brain drain' (Raji, 2010)

The second and most comprehensive wave began in 1979 and is predominantly understood as a product of the Islamic regime's establishment. It is estimated that one million people left Iran in the years following the Iranian revolution, with 500,000 leaving by the end of 1979 (International Organisation of Migration). This large exodus can be divided into two groups.

The first group comprises of those Iranians associated with the Shah's regime in Iran, namely the 'royalists'. 'They left Iran with their extensive accumulated capital when the political situation became uncertain' (Ghorashi, 2005:200) and were generally considered to be professionals, entrepreneurs and academics from middle to upper class backgrounds. The second group, which makes up the largest Iranian emigration did not leave Iran until after 1980. This group was much more heterogeneous than the first group, varying in class, religion, education and political ideology (Kelley, 1993; Ghorashi, 2009). Their reasons for leaving Iran were linked to the hardship and persecution they endured as a result of the revolution, as well as young men avoiding military service/the war and young women escaping confining gender constrictions (Hakimzadeh, 2006). As the second wave included large numbers of professionals, entrepreneurs and academics this accelerated the brain drain within Iran.

The third wave of Iranians migrants have left Iran over the last 20 years and can again be separated into two distinct groups. Hakimzadeh (2006) identifies these groups as: 1) a continuation of previous waves with highly skilled individuals leaving universities and research institutions, and 2) for the first time, a considerable number of labour migrants and economic migrants from working class backgrounds, often with lower education levels and fewer transferable skills. Unlike the two previous waves, this wave was caused by Iran's economic crisis, deteriorating human rights record, surveillance of everyday life and diminishing opportunities. As can be seen from tables two and three below, between 1995 and 2013 there were 136,929 Iranian applications for asylum in the USA, UK, Germany and the Netherlands. The year 2000 alone seen 34,343 Iranians submit asylum applications worldwide, the largest since 1986 (Hakimzadeh, 2006).

Table 2: Iranian Asylum Applications 1995-2004 (Hakimzadeh, 2006)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Germany	4,314	5,264	4,490	2,955	3,407	4,878	3,445	2,642	2,049	1,369
Turkey	936	1,454	1,654	1,979	3,843	3,860	3,385	2,505	3,092	2029
UK	520	615	585	745	1,320	5,610	3,415	2,630	3497	3992
Netherland	6,075	2,698	1,521	1,679	1,527	2,543	1,519	663	555	450
Austria	485	656	502	950	3,343	2,559	734	760	979	343
Canada	1,901	1,728	1,210	880	794	767	768	381	329	352

USA	498	468	811	746	778	870	944	880	503	421
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Table 3: Iranian Asylum Applications 2005 – 2013.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Germany	929	611	631	815	1170	2475	3352	4348	4424	53,568
Turkey	1716	2297	1685	2116	1981	2881	3411	3589	5897	50,310
UK	3503	2683	2525	2597	2146	2224	3051	3162	2967	47,787
Netherland	557	921	187	322	502	785	929	834	728	24,995
Austria	306	274	248	250	340	387	457	761	595	14,929
Canada	357	246	207	267	310	327	318	277	216	11,635
USA	224	281	207	222	237	384	499	652	954	10,579

Source: UNHCR, Population data unit.

The largest concentration of Iranians resulting from these emigrations is in Los Angeles, California often dubbed 'Tehrangeles' or 'Irangeles' by its residents (Kelly, 1993) and as such, it has come to be considered the cultural base of the Iranian diaspora with most diasporic media broadcasting from there (Naficy, 1993). Furthermore, cultural commodities which are forbidden by the Islamic state in Iran, are exported from here to Iranians in other countries and even smuggled into Iran itself (Graham and Khosravi, 1997).

Iranian Diaspora in the United States

Los Angeles is one of the most multicultural cities in the U.S, with one - third of its population having been born in other countries (Kelley, 1993). Although estimates vary as to the actual number of Iranians in the city of Los Angeles, Ghorashi (2009; 2005; 2003) outlines an estimated Iranian population between 200,000 and 1 million. Iranians in LA are generally considered to be immigrants who arrived within the second wave, with money, education and the skills necessary to obtain good jobs. As Naficy (1993) states, they did not 'enter the US economy as an ethnic underclass but as a sort of transnational elite, requiring minor adjustments but not massive retraining' (Naficy, 1993:6). This is generally because Iran was considered westernised before the Iranian revolution. Many of these Iranians were politicians, famous singers, actors and radio and television personalities, who, with the safety of their capital behind them, were able to continue their activities abroad and use their experiences in Iran to build new communication networks in LA, settling into the more affluent areas of Los Angeles such as Beverly Hills and Santa Monica (Ghorashi, 2005).

Tehrangelles

Iranians in LA are therefore generally considered by many to be a successful community with good education and high incomes (Borzorgmehr and Sabagh, 1988), the pinnacle of immigrant success in their pursuit of the American dream. Furthermore, unlike other immigrants in LA, Iranians do not live in a single ethnic enclave but are spread throughout the city. However, it is important to note that Borzorgmehr and Sabagh (1997) found that different Iranian religio-ethnic groups were settled in different geographical locations within LA. Baha'is were concentrated in West LA and Santa Monica, Muslims in Santa Monica and Springs, and Jews in the more affluent neighbourhoods of Westwood and Beverly Hills. Regardless of this difference between religio-ethnic group and the geographical location of their settlement, Iranians still form a rather tight community through diverse activities organised by and for Iranians, ranging from the religious and cultural to the political (Ghorashi, 2005).

Due to the sheer number of Iranians residing in LA it is not surprising that the majority of research on Iranian diaspora has taken place here. Kelley (1993), Naficy (1993), Borzorgmehr and Sabagh (1988), and Blair (1991) are some of the earlier prominent researchers of the Iranian diaspora in LA. Their work focussed on the dispersal of Iranians with particular reference to when and why they moved, as well as their resettlement in LA and the creation of a diasporic community. One of the first influential books published on this diaspora was an edited collection by Ron Kelley entitled *Irangelles: Iranians in Los Angeles* which covered a variety of topics including: migration, nationalism, religio-ethnic diversity, identity, family, gender, wealth and economics, as well as political life and popular culture. The contributors of this book provide the first in-depth look at Iranians residing outside of Iran and how they remain connected to a homeland they cannot physically return to. They demonstrate how the Iranian community in LA is generally seen as a re-creation of the nostalgic years before the revolution as the majority of those in the Iranian diaspora in California oppose the current Islamic regime in Iran. This is either explicitly advocated through political activities or implicitly demonstrated through the ways in which cultural and social activities are organised in the country (Ghorashi, 2004).

For those Iranians who were brought up during the reign of the Shah, Irangeles feels *more* like Iran than the Islamic Iran after the revolution (Ghorashi, 2005). Therefore, Irangeles could be construed as an example of what Jean Baudrillard determines as hyper reality. Hamid Naficy (1993) uses Freud's concept of the Fetish to explain the ways in which Iran is portrayed through Iranian cultural media in LA, however Irangeles itself could be seen as a Fetish and an example of Hyper Reality. Irangeles is a symbol or set of signifiers which represent a place that doesn't exist anymore, for these Iranians Irangeles is a more 'realistic' and acceptable representation of *their* Iran than the 'real' country of Iran (Naficy, 1993). It is a fetish which allows them to disavow their loss in exile. In order to maintain this fetish, Irangeles is a stereotype which represents an Iran now lost in time or space; this Iran remains only in the past, lodged in the memories, rituals, traditions and habitus of its former residents. Irangeles is a hybrid community which, 'through the process of globalisation, has allowed Iranian cultural space to take root in California' (Ghorashi, 2005:202). It is a process of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, a newly constructed space in which the past and present, tradition and modernity intersect (Ghorashi, 2005). This idea will be explored again in chapter five when discussing the construction of an Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Maintaining connections to Iran as home

As stated above, Naficy (1993) argues that one of the main ways in which Irangeles was created, and its connection to the homeland maintained was through popular culture. He argues that through Iranian periodicals, television programs, radio programs, film production, theatre, music and musical performances a symbolic community was created in which certain representations of home (Iran) and the past were repeatedly circulated and reinforced. For example, radio programmes and television programmes have played a major role in connecting the people of diaspora to their memories of Iran. Initially, they provided political news from Iran, news about Iranian entertainers in LA, anti-Khomeini news commentary, brief comedy sketches and a few musical numbers. Importantly they also served as a way to advertise Iranian business in the area such as restaurants and nightclubs, or for services such as Iranian lawyers, physicians, mechanics etc. Thus providing a framework for an Iranian network. Programming also focused on consolidating an Iranian ethnic identity; images of pre-

Islamic Iran were transformed into icons and fetishes. Audiences could identify with unchanging symbolic constructions of Iran as with programmes focussed on the homeland, Iranian nationalism, cultural authenticity and secularism, viewers could continue to disavow the loss of *their* Iran, the Islamic regime and their exile (Naficy, 1993:) and instead reinforce their imagined community in LA.

Tehrangeles Networks

For the Iranians in California and especially LA, the existence of diverse groups, different activities and other resources are essential to their feeling of social inclusion in the new society. The social resources available to them allow the formation of a tight knit network of Iranians as up to 80% of informal connections of Iranians in LA are with other Iranians (Ghorashi, 2009). This tight network acts as safety net for its members, even when Iranians select their own contacts within the community (Ghorashi, 2002). Furthermore, it acts as a mode of continuity replacing their family and friends network back home in Iran with a new network in the host country.

Another way in which this network of Iranians formed was through organisations such as The Network of Iranian Professionals of Orange County (NIPOC). This began as an informal gathering between friends in 1986 with the aim of creating the basis of an Iranian community to support each other in their work. After they started networking, the organisation expanded exponentially. By mid 1990s the NIPOC was large enough to start organising large scale cultural activities such as *Mehregan* (Persian Autumn festival) and *Nowruz* (Persian New year). Whilst Nowruz is an ancient tradition still practised in Iran, Mehregan is an ancient tradition which can only be found in Iranian history books. Thus further exemplifying the constructive nature of diasporas as 'imagined hyper real communities' and the impact of '(re)invented traditions' within cultural practices (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992 in Ghorashi 2004). This version of Mehregan is more 'real' than the version of Mehregan in Iran. The broader aims of the organisation were to safeguard Iranian cultural heritage and to create a connection between Iranian culture and American culture (Ghorashi, 2004). What is even more interesting is that Mehregan was chosen by the organisers of the NIPOC as one of the

ways to connect Iranian and American culture. By recreating this autumn Persian tradition, they were able to show similarities between that and the American celebration of Thanksgiving.

At the festivals of Mehregan and Nowruz links between the cultures were also achieved by providing various information booths about different regions of Iran; with examples of traditional dance and dress. Several stands sold Persian food and various cultural tents displayed, and sold Persian poetry and art. This once again demonstrates the hybrid nature of this community. Essentialism would see this 'glorification of the past' as an attempt to recreate a nostalgic past (Ghorashi, 2004). However, Ghorashi rightly demonstrates how the concept of hybridity denounces this essentialist notion. The celebrations of Mehregan and Norouz in California are not essentialist because they are not static but ever evolving. They are imagined into existence and become de-territorialised from their original 'roots' creating something new, in between difference, something which is consistently recreated. A Persian cultural celebration in an American context which brings Californian society together rather than creating duality.

European Iranian Diasporas

Unfortunately, not all Iranian diasporas around the world have the same prominence and sense of community described in LA. Within Europe, Iranian diasporas have a deep sense of individuality and are marred with internal dissent. Germany hosts the largest group of Iranians with almost 140,000 residing there by 2013 (see table one), whilst in Sweden, Iranians are the largest non-western immigrant group with approximately 86,667 residents (table one). As of 2009 the Netherlands hosted approximately 30,617 Iranian emigrants (Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics).

Iranians in the Netherlands and Sweden

Halleh Ghorashi has done extensive work investigating the lived experience of Iranians in the Netherlands and compared this to the lived experience of Iranians in LA; with particular focus on Iranian women and their role in political activist groups or organisations. From the 1980s,

particularly the latter half of the decade, Iranians came to the Netherlands as political refugees, moving to the country out of necessity rather than personal choice and without the necessary capital to make their transition comfortable. Most Iranians wished to move to English speaking countries such as Canada and US because it is a language taught in Iranian education. However throughout the 1980s, particularly after the onset of the Iran/Iraq war, changes to immigration policies in English speaking countries made this dream extremely difficult to achieve for all classes which is why they ended up in 'buffer' countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden (Ghorashi, 2009). Sweden went on to attract more than double the amount of Iranians as the Netherlands, for example in 1983 only 4,554 Iranians resided in Sweden, but by 1997 this number had increased exponentially to 54,000. Like Iranians migrating to the U.S, the vast majority of those who moved to Sweden and the Netherlands were highly educated, middle class individuals escaping the revolution.

Lack of an Iranian Community and Network

Within the Netherlands Iranians tend to live in the urbanised western parts known as *de Randstad* (The Hague, Rotterdam and Amsterdam) and in Sweden they mainly inhabit Greater Stockholm. However, it is important to note that once again Iranians are not concentrated in any one area of the cities but are spread out across society. This appears to be a common theme across the Iranian diaspora with similar findings in the USA and UK. However, unlike the sense of community expressed in the LA Iranian diaspora, the political, social and cultural activities of Iranians in Europe are sporadic. Ghorashi (2003) describes Iranian gatherings in the Netherlands as 'incidental; one cannot speak of a strong Iranian community' (2003:3), instead there are explicit internal divisions highlighting a deep sense of individuality, as well as processes of exclusion from the host country.

Fear and Suspicion between Iranians

The lack of Iranian community within the Netherlands is attributed to the reservation and suspicion which exist amongst its Iranian members. This became especially evident throughout the 1980s when rumours about connections between the Iranian embassy in the Hague and the Dutch authorities came to light. Several documents have outlined the role of Iranian embassies in various European countries (Ghorashi, 2002), particularly their role in

spying on Iranians abroad and the assassination of prominent Iranian figures in exile. For example, in Sweden an Iranian was arrested for carrying out surveillance on Iranian immigrants and passing the information gathered onto the Iranian Embassy in Stockholm (Graham & Khosravi, 1997). Ghorashi (2003) believed that this fear and suspicion was one of the main reasons for the lack of group formation among early migrant Iranians in the Netherlands. Throughout the 1990s Iranians went on to show increasing interests in various cultural, social and democratic activities and this led to an increase in the number of Iranian organisations. However, it appears that this did not lead to the formation of a cohesive Iranian community. Ghorashi relates this to the first wave of migrants and their political affiliations. These migrants were exclusively political and by defining themselves in this light, cultural and social activities became divided along political lines, many of which succumbed to internal conflict and failed to have a broad effect on Iranians, ultimately leading to a deep sense of individuality.

Iranians as the Other

Ghorashi also attributes the lack of an Iranian community to the processes of *othering* in the Netherlands, which she believes is related to the country's approach to migration. In the Netherlands migration is generally perceived as temporary rather than permanent and this stems from the discourse on migration throughout the post war economic growth of the 1950s where the need for unskilled labour forced the Dutch Government to seek 'guest workers' from outside of the Netherlands. Throughout the 1980s the term guest worker changed to immigrant but the perception of their status did not change, their stay was still considered temporary and there was an expectation of them to return home. However, contemporary understandings of diaspora highlights that not all migrants wish to return home and considering them as guests creates a dichotomous relationship between 'us vs them', Dutch vs other, linking discourses around migration with discourses of national identity. Constructing the migrant as a guest means that they do not belong to society, and as such do not belong to the nation even though they live inside it. Despite the increased numbers of people in exile, of refugees and displaced persons, Ghorashi (2009) argues that 'we still live in era of the national order of things, in which rootedness in a culture and a geographic territory is still

conceived of as normal, natural feature of humanity and as a moral and spiritual need' (Malkki, 1992, 1995). Migrants are often perceived as rooted in their country of origin, even when they have no intention of returning or have never lived there in the first place. The often cited joke by Ulrich Beck explains this nicely. A black man in Germany is asked: 'Where are you from?' He answers: 'Munich', Q: 'And your parents?', A: 'Also from Munich', Q: 'And where were they born?', A: 'My mother in Munich', Q: 'And your father?', A: 'in Ghana...', Q: 'ah, so you're from Ghana'. A stereotype reinforcing the notion that the real, unbreakable tie a migrant has is to his or her 'country of origin' (Ghorashi, 2002).

This process of *othering* was also present in literature on the Iranian diaspora in Sweden. Whilst education is highly regarded by Iranians as *the* means of social betterment and mobility (Graham and Khosravi, 1997), this does not seem to have helped them in Swedish society. Sweden's Iranian population are relatively young, for example throughout the 1990s 86% of Iranians were under the age of 44 (further evidence of brain drain in Iran) and like the Netherlands, they occupied all levels of the education system. Many Iranians from both societies have expressed dismay at not being able to access professional jobs for which they were fully qualified to do. In Sweden over 40% of Iranians in work believed they are over-qualified for the job they do (Graham and Khoasravi, 1997), and almost all display a reluctance to accept manual work. According to Graham and Khosravi this attitude has to be understood against the dramatic loss of status many have suffered as a result of exile. This finding is further supported by the work of Lewin (2001) who attributes this loss of status with the process of *othering*. As Iran is a patriarchal society, men hold a dominant role and some work is regarded as only appropriate for men, or it is considered more valuable when it is being conducted by a man. Furthermore, in Iran men tend to work in a profession which corresponds to their education, therefore enjoying a privileged position. However, upon entering Swedish society they are no longer afforded this 'luxury', as they have neither the possibility of obtaining an appropriate job, nor, if working, enjoy the dominant role which Swedish men have in their work place (Lewin, 2001). This causes Iranian men to suffer a crisis of identity, as their identity is founded on their 'breadwinner' status. Furthermore, they have never been in the position of the *other* and this destroys their self-image as the dominant

figure within their social life as a whole (Lewin, 2001). On the other hand, Iranian women, who are familiar with being *othered* in Iranian society, were able to enter the Swedish labour market much earlier than men because they would accept lower paid work thus providing them with an opportunity to assimilate into Swedish society. This new position in Swedish society provides these women with a positive self-image and the ability to achieve goals previously out of their reach.

Home and Belonging

'The question of home is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion and exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances' (Brah, 1996:192)

According to Ghorashi (2009) the differences between Iranian migrants and their sense of belonging or not belonging within the host country hinges upon discourses around national identity within the host country. She explains that until recently the Dutch were known for not 'stressing' their national identity, but elements of Dutchness are consistently present in the banality of everyday life. She argues that the Dutch notion of national identity is quite exclusive and thick. By thickness she refers to understandings of Dutchness based on colour, 'roots', and certain codes of behaviour which exclude difference (2003:5); she relates these codes of behaviour to a Calvinist background. It is this thickness which leads to a process of exclusion as even when these Iranian migrants go to great lengths to be part of Dutch society, i.e. learning Dutch fluently within their first year of migration and studying in various fields, they are still not treated as equals but strangers. A further consequence of this is the fact that people from different backgrounds who were born in the Netherlands or who have lived most of their life there and have Dutch nationality are also not included as 'one of us' (Ghorashi, 2003). Therefore the only ones who are 'included' are those who fit in with the thick notion of Dutchness, namely those who are white and Christian (Wekker, 1995:78).

Thick National Identity

Identification within the Dutch context is therefore limited to the fixed positioning of Dutch or non Dutch, belonging and not belonging. By constructing Iranians as non Dutch, their desire to be recognised and be accepted for who they are is denied. The image Dutch society mirrors back to them, is different to their own self-image which causes confliction in their sense of self and self-worth. In spite of all their achievements in the Netherlands, including their attempts to become part of Dutch society through study or work, and by differentiating themselves from other Islamic migrants they still feel as though they cannot break through the thick wall of Dutchness in order to feel any sense of belonging. This resonates with the postcolonial literature to be discussed in following chapter. This sense of uprootedness causes them to become disconnected, doubting who they are and in order to re-negotiate their identity, and find a sense of belonging in the Netherlands they turn to nostalgic feelings of their past, once again reinforcing the notion that the real, unbreakable tie a migrant has is to his or her country of origin (Ghorashi, 2002). They then distance themselves from Dutchness and position themselves solely as Iranian, constructing the Dutch as cold, distanced and stingy (Ghorashi, 2003).

Nostalgia

According to Ghorashi (2009) this desire for a sense of belonging and nostalgia for Iran evokes selective images of the past based on fixed images and memories of Iran as warm and caring in contrast to the construction of Dutch as cold and distanced. As they cannot create a sense of home in the new context, they create an imaginary home based on the past, alive in their memories, giving them an illusionary sense of home. But it is a home which can never be achieved, and instead of aiding a sense of belonging in the Netherlands, Ghorashi believes it is a hindrance because they feel as though they can only belong to Iran, an Iran that no longer exists, making belonging in Netherlands impossible. This is further reinforced by the fact that there is not a strong sense of community between Iranians in the Netherlands, there is no Iranian network which can provide an alternative source of social reinforcement.

Similarly to Iranians residing in the Netherlands, Iranians in Sweden also view the host society as cold and distanced (Graham & Khosravi, 1997), however, like Iranians living in LA, they

have recreated and reconstructed aspects of homeland culture in Sweden. This home, like Tehrangeles is a recreation of Iran as home prior to the Iranian revolution. To recreate a homeland demands an act of remembering and nostalgia, however nostalgia is not just about fixing the past as it was, the past is actively created in the attempt to remember it. Much of the pre-revolutionary Iran has been physically erased by revolution, persecution, war and economic chaos (Graham & Khosravi, 1997). Therefore, much of the diaspora culture that is being constructed around the world is not taken directly from Iran or even recollections of how things were, Graham and Khosravi outline that different national versions of the diaspora culture borrow from each other, for example Swedish Iranian diasporas imports products such as music, videos, magazines and foodstuffs from Tehrangeles. Furthermore, like Tehrangeles such national discourses are remembered, reconstructed and represented through mass media including television programmes and radio shows. Graham and Khosravi state, that constructing images of the homeland partly keeps the myth of return alive and partly alleviates the pain of separation from the homeland. However, as shown through Brah's (1996) concept of homing desire and what will be discussed through my research on Iranians in Newcastle, is that the 'fetishization of the homeland' is not necessarily about a desire to return to the physical homeland. Many Iranians are aware that their ideas of Iran as home are purely imagined and no longer exist in time or space, however it serves as a way of connecting to a past home through symbols, imaginings, culture and rituals in order to create a sense of home and belonging in a new space.

Thin National Identity

Whilst Dutch national identity is viewed in terms of a thick notion of Dutchness which excludes Iranians from a sense of belonging in the Netherlands, American national identity is understood as a melting pot of cultures and as such a heterogeneous approach to nationality is formed which creates a thin notion of Americanness. As Behdad (1997) outlines 'displacement is the precondition for the formation of national consciousness in the United States [...] it is the necessary prerequisite to imagining a national community in America' (1997: 156). This thin national identity allows for thick particularities e.g. people with varied backgrounds and cultures, making space for hybridity and multiple positionings. The notion of

American identity is an umbrella term that includes different particularities, thus allowing Iranians to feel both American and Iranian. The recreation of Iran as home outside of Iran (in Tehrangeles) has been essential for creating a sense of belonging in a new context, as when there are elements of the past such as cultural rituals and social gatherings there is very little need for nostalgia, hence the difference between the experiences of Iranians living in Los Angeles compared to Iranians living in the Netherlands. Tehrangeles serves as a bridge between the remembering the past and the present context, however it is not only through 'national frameworks', that recreations of Iran as home serve as connections to Iran. The orientation towards the homeland centre could be symbolic, imagined, ritual or religious (Toloyan, 1996).

Non-National modes of Belonging

Cameron McAuliffe and other diaspora researchers challenge the limitations inherent in transnational discourses that rely too heavily on a national framework to the exclusion of other scales and modes of belonging (McAuliffe, 2008, 2007; Mavroudi 2007; Werbner, 2000). Whilst national discourses certainly remain as the dominant mode of belonging in our contemporary world, other communal modes of belonging are grounding points for transnational relations too. Werbner (2000) outlines that the study of transnational diasporic relations needs to uncover non-national ways people negotiate their communal belonging,

'Non-national modes of communal affiliation, whether considered across a hierarchy of geographic scales, such as local or regional identities (see Velayutham and Wise 2005), or through the lens of different modes of belonging in the one place, such as through class, gender, or ethnicity (see Werbner 2000), represent under-researched fields in an area dominated by studies of national diasporas' (McAuliffe, 2007: 308).

Whilst Naficy (1993) outlines that the exilic conditions in Los Angeles transcends the boundaries of difference within the Iranian diaspora, other research has shown that ethnic, linguistic, class and religious differences are still persistent and create disparate experiences of diaspora and belonging (Borzorgmehr, 1992; McAuliffe, 2007:2008). For example, in his

work on second generation Iranian migrants in Sydney, Vancouver and London, from both Muslim and Baha'i religions McAuliffe (2007) shows how connections of socio economic status, class, religion, generation and time of settlement exist alongside national affiliations and are alternative lenses through which transitional communities can be understood. He found that local class relations are 'reproduced differences' inherited from the homeland. Subsequently arguing that the first cohort to enter the diaspora has often sought to distinguish itself from later flows 'through an appeal, both explicit and implicit, to the pre-Revolutionary class differences that existed in Iran' (McAuliffe, 2008:67). This notion of class separation was generally related to the success of social mobilisation within the new societies, with explicit class separations being enforced between the established community and the 'fresh off the boat' (newest) migrants who represented a challenge to existing orders and class relations. These aspirations to reproduce class systems from pre-revolutionary Iran served to reinforce their diasporic desire to maintain a prior 'Iranian life' whilst at the same time separating these class actors from other 'Iranians' who problematize this imagining. For example, some of McAuliffe's respondents spoke of fights emerging between youths at Iranians events which was often attributed to the new migrants who 'didn't know how to behave in their new society' (2008:70). This resonates with some of the views of my respondents which will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

McAuliffe (2007) also argues that religious identities are another route towards decentring the hegemonic dominance of national identities and the positioning of individuals and groups relative to these structuring discourses. He challenges discrete national understandings of homeland and migrant experiences by looking at the internal religious differentiation within Iranian diasporas in Vancouver, London and Sydney. Interviewing Iranians from Muslim and Baha'i religious backgrounds, McAuliffe demonstrates that Iranians with different religious identities formed different understandings and constructions of Iran. He found that the children of Iranian migrants from a Muslim background held a more visceral attachment to the Iranian homeland, whereas Baha'is were less focussed up Iran and more likely to be tied into global transnational connections with other Baha'is as self-confessed cosmopolitan global citizens. What Iran means in all of these contexts is ultimately subjective, unfixed and dynamic, thereby

showing not all modes of belonging are related to national understandings of, or affiliations with the homeland. As Pnina Werbner outlines in her work on complex diasporas, it is quite possible for people from a single cultural region to be locked in bitter national or religious conflicts but within diaspora the sharing of a regional culture can create cross cutting ties, coalitions and alliances which mitigate such conflicts. In her work on South Asian diasporas in Britain she found that the sharing of a rich material culture of consumption, both high cultural and popular, created public arenas and economic channels for cooperation and communal enjoyment which cut across national origins and religious beliefs (Werbner, 2004).

Iranian Diaspora in the UK

At present there is very little literature examining the existence of Iranian diasporic communities in the UK, with most of the literature centring on the experiences of Iranians living in the capital city of London. According to the 2011 Census approximately 36,250 Iranians reside in London, making this the largest concentration of Iranians in the UK. As noted when discussing the population of Iranians residing in America, Netherlands and Sweden, it is difficult to give an accurate account of how many Iranians currently reside in the UK, but the 2011 census outlines that there are 84,735 Iranians (by country of birth)⁶ of whom 75,590 live in England, 1,695 in Wales, 2,773 in Scotland and 282 in Northern Ireland. This is a vast increase compared to the 2001 census which recorded 40,181 Iranians (by country of birth). This increase is typically related to the economic instability of Iran, the lack of opportunities available there and the increasing political tensions. As can be seen in tables two and three (at the beginning of this chapter) between 2000 and 2010, 34,822 Iranians have applied to the UK for asylum, and in 2004 Iran was the top nationality applying to the UK for asylum, accounting for 10% of all applications (Hakimzadeh, 2006).

Whilst conducting this research it was particularly difficult to obtain specific demographic information on Iranians residing in the UK and Spellman (2004) outlines a few reasons for this:

⁶ With regards to ethnic identity, as of 2011 75,590 people in England and Wales identified themselves as an Iranian, but this figure dropped to 34,047 when looking at the number of people who defined their nationality as Iranian (Office for National Statistics)

1) Iranians do not live in a concentrated area like many other minority groups do; 2) they do not appear on census records because they have obtained British Citizenship and; 3) they are not a group that poses social problems for British society, therefore they do not draw the public eye. She also outlines that the relatively small number of Iranians living in the UK may be another reason. However, since her research took place the number of Iranians living in the UK has doubled. Spellman (2004) was the first researcher to complete an extensive, in-depth account of Iranians living in the UK, which has provided invaluable, previously unrecorded historical and demographic information. She outlines that Iranians first appeared in census information in 1981 and were determined through their place/country of birth. Within the 1991 census Iranians were classified in the 'Other- Other' category which comprised of a variety of ethnic groups. They were not specifically distinguished within this category either, but rather placed within the category of 'African and Arab'. Other figures in the 1991 census indicated that there were 32,262 Iranian nationals residing in Britain but these did not include the children born to Iranians nor those whose immigration status was unclear (Spellman, 2004). Within the 2001 census and the implementation of the 'write in' or self-description ethnicity category, 40,181 Iranians were identified as living in England and Wales.

Iranians in London

According to Spellman (2004) London experienced its first major influx of Iranians just prior to and after the Iranian revolution. This consisted of mainly affluent, well-educated Iranians who were familiar with the English language settling into affluent areas such as Kensington, Chelsea, Knightsbridge, Richmond, Hampstead and Swiss Cottage. As stated earlier within this chapter, with the onset of the Iran/Iraq war and the increasing persecution of certain religious groups, political factions and ethnic minority groups, a second wave of Iranians left Iran. This was a far more heterogeneous group than the first and also comprised of those from a 'weaker' socio-economic backgrounds. In light of this heterogeneity most Iranian social groups within London were fragmented and based on political, religious, social, economic and ethnic networks. Like that observed by Ghorashi in the Netherlands, as well as Graham and Khosravi in Sweden, there was a strong element of distrust between London Iranians throughout the 1980s due to the sensitive political situation in Iran. Therefore, throughout the

1980s and 1990s there was very little effort by Iranians to maintain a unified collective identity (Spellman, 2004:40) or to form a cohesive community. This could also be attributed to the fact that Iranians never believed their stay in the UK would be permanent. As Spellman (2004) observes in her research, many lived with their suitcase packed waiting for the political scene to change so they could return to Iran.

Throughout this wait Iranians in London made a conscious effort to fit into British society, sometimes at the exclusion of their Iranian identity, for example some attempted to camouflage their Iranian identity by trying to build up groups of non-Iranian friends and learning to speak English with the 'right' accent. There was also a strong emphasis on getting a place in a good university, particular Oxford or securing a well job paid. All of these were markers of success. Spellman (2004) also notes that many Iranians felt obliged to change their names to a western one in order to get a job, or alternatively attempt to pass as another culture such as Italian.

Not all Iranians were concerned with giving up their Iranianess, on the contrary many became concerned with maintaining Iranian cultural forms and the Persian language. There became an increasing need for facilities which catered to their religious and cultural traditions, particularly weddings, funerals and significant religious dates. Such feelings have also led to an increase in Iranian educational, socio-cultural, business venues and activities in London including: Iranian restaurants, Persian music shops, media centres, Persian language centres, poetry readings, contemporary and classic Persian music concerts, films and comedy shows. There is also an abundance of different cultural events which take place for Iranian New Year (Nowruz), however again, these are usually separated along cultural, economic and social lines which further emphasises the internal divisions within the diaspora.

In a bid to understand the ways in which Iranian Muslims dealt with their displacement, Spellman (2004) focussed on the ways in which religion and popular forms of religiosity were used as methods to make sense of their lives outside of Iran. Drawing attention to a wealth of Islamic and other religious practices taking place within the Iranian diaspora in London, she explores the ways in which they are used as a means of creating a sense of belonging in the

UK. By focussing on these different forms of Iranian practices and representation, which developed and redeveloped during the 1980s and 1990s, several key aspects involved in constructing identities during the process of migration were identified. Some of these are already outlined in the paragraphs above but the most prominent finding was how many Iranians seen the Islamic Republic as the root of their social, cultural and/or emotional problems, as well as the demise of their glorious Persian culture found in pre-Islamic Iran. Accordingly, their identity as an Iranian was renegotiated in opposition to the Islamic Republic and the form of Islam it practises. For these reasons there were many conflicting ideas as to how one should live as an Iranian outside of Iran, particularly Iranian Shia Muslims. Using the Nimatullahi and Shahmaghsoudi Sufi orders as an example, Spellman (2004) observed that although the vocabulary of the key terms and components of the various gatherings remained the same, the implementation and observance of the content of Islam was varied and negotiated. Popular forms of Islam and Orthodox Islam are therefore not so clearly demarcated. Religion cannot be treated as an isolated cultural phenomenon divorced from political and socio-economic relations of power (Spellman, 2004). Places such as the Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism not only provided Iranian members with a social and religious base for belonging and differentiation but it allowed them to disavow and distance themselves from the Iranian government. Furthermore, due to the fact that this school has centres all over the world, there was a powerful sense of being a part of both a real and imagined community.

Whilst Spellman (2004) focussed on the ways in which religion was used as 'vehicle' for making sense of their lives outside of Iran, Reza Gholami (2015) looks at how Iranian identity and the Iranian diaspora in London is formed against and in complete opposition to religion, namely Islam and Islamic identity, a term he refers to as non-Islamiosity. In his book *'Secularism and Identity: Non- Islamiosity in the Iranian Diaspora'* Gholami focusses on the secularisms *internal* to diasporic Muslim communities, particularly how identity, community and consciousness come to be constructed, experienced and lived through these modes of the secular (non-Islamiosity). In his discussion of non-Islamiosity Gholami (2015) takes fault with the presumption *a priori* that 'the Islamic' whether as a religion or culture, constitutes the

key marker of Muslim migrants' identity. He also takes fault with the notion that the process of migration and formation of diasporic networks and consciousness tends to intensify religious beliefs and practices. It is for this reason that he criticises McAuliffe's work on secularism and internal differentiation within the Iranian diaspora. Gholami argues that by solely focussing on Iranians who display a 'benign attitude' towards Islam, McAuliffe is rendering those who have successfully secularised their Iranian identity from its Islamic base, as irrelevant for analysis and therefore subsequently fails to understand the complexity of secularism. Whilst Gholami does not intend to refute the importance of Islam and religiosity for Iranians or Muslims within diaspora, he is concerned with the fixation and essentialisations associated with presuming all migrants are religious and their identity renegotiated through religious means. In light of this, he attempts to understand how different, often contradictory and mutually antagonistic discourses, practices, or projects traverse diasporic spaces all identifying with the Iranian diaspora, and how they utilise those spaces to redefine the Iranian diaspora, or what it means to be an Iranian in diaspora. His main focus is on Iranians who identify with his concept of non-Islamiosity (those who are vehemently opposed to Islam) and how the Iranian diaspora is formed in accordance with this concept. Non-Islamiosity can be understood in a similar vein to the work of Naficy (1993), as a reaction to the formation of the Islamic Republic in Iran. Constructed in anger at the regime, Gholami (2015) outlines that non-Islamiosity is a form of dissidence and empowerment. However, what about the Iranians living in London who still identify with Islam and their Islamic identity? Are they active within this Iranian community?

Whilst Spellman (2004) and Sreberny (2002) have identified that there is no unified or collective Iranian identity within the diaspora. Gholami (2015) outlines that this attitude seems to be changing. As people accept that they are here to stay there appears to be 'urgent calls' for the creation of a cohesive diasporic community. However, Iranian diasporic understandings of community do not revolve around a physical proximity or living in clusters. Rather community is based on an imagined space which exists at familial and societal levels in which national/cultural identity can be anchored and played out. Community is a sentiment, a feeling of unity and belonging to something shared. Although this Iranian diaspora is founded on notions of non-Islamiosity, something which Gholami (2015) describes as endemic, radical,

eradicator, productive, unapologetic, enabling, arrogant, spiteful, and outright offensive (208), devout diasporic Iranian Shia's *concede* certain religious practices to the power/products of non-Islamiosity in order to be part of an Iranian community. Therefore instead of secularism being external to Muslim diasporic communities, there appears to be a mutually constitutive relationship between non-Islamiosity and devout Shiism in order to create a sense of belonging in the UK.

Iranians in the North East of England

Due to the lack of research on the Iranian diaspora in the UK, and indeed globally, it is the purpose of this thesis to contribute to the existing literature by providing the first in-depth account of an Iranian diaspora residing near the city of Newcastle upon Tyne in the North East of England. According to the ONS (2011) 3,055 Iranians (by country of birth) reside in the North East of England, which is made up of the following counties: Northumberland, County Durham, Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley. The amount of people in the North East who identify their ethnic identity as Iranian drops to 2,661 (with 196 identifying as White Iranian; 76 as Mixed Multiple Ethnic Group Iranian; 1,406 as Asian/Asian British Iranian and 973 identified as other ethnic group Iranian).

Due to my connections with an Iranian community residing near Newcastle, this thesis mainly focused on Iranians living within the region of Tyne and Wear, although there was one respondent who lived in Durham. According to the ONS as of 2011 1,164 Iranians were resident in Newcastle upon Tyne, 362 in Gateshead, 314 in Sunderland, 202 in County Durham and 189 in South Tyneside. However, much like the demographic information outlined earlier on other Iranian diasporas, the Iranians within this study believed that there were at least 15,000 Iranians living in the North East.

In a similar fashion to the literature which already exists, this thesis is interested in how Iranians renegotiate their cultural identity upon moving to the UK. Using concepts outlined in the next chapter such as hybridity, fluidity, 'in-betweens' and diaspora, this thesis intends to demonstrate how Iranian cultural identity is recreated in the tensions between belonging,

location and culture. More specifically, I argue it is reconstructed in a third space in-between their reimaginings of Iran as home and their desire to create a home in Newcastle.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Conceptual Framework

The aim of this chapter is to theoretically explore the concepts central to this thesis, namely Diaspora, Identity and Home and Belonging. Over the last few decades these concepts have been dominated by notions of fluidity, hybridity and fragmentation; products of the post-modern turn. Through these notions we are then introduced to ideas of 'in-betweenness' and the 'third space' which form the basis of analysis in this thesis. All of these ideas stem from the pioneering work of post-colonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, therefore the first section of this chapter will highlight the significance of their work, and the impact this has had on our understandings of identity. The second section of this chapter entitled 'Conceptualising Diaspora: A Genealogy' will then focus on how postcolonial concepts of identity have informed post-modern understandings of diaspora, and the migrants experience of identity renegotiation in movement. Tied in with the concept of diaspora are the notions of home and belonging, therefore the final section of this chapter will theoretically and empirically explore these concepts and their influence on identity renegotiation.

POSTCOLONIAL CONCEPTS OF IDENTITY

The Self as Unified

Throughout the period of colonialism European society was assumed (by Europeans) to be the most advanced society in the world and this was largely based on the internal affairs of Europe's history and formation, namely the Enlightenment (or Age of Reason) and modernity (Hall, 1992). In this period European man believed himself to be the pinnacle of human achievement, a unified, fully centred, rational individual endowed with capacities of reason and consciousness (Hall, 1990). Enlightenment Man held the belief that the essential centre of the self was a person's identity and this identity was innate, fixed and stable. Therefore modern

society was centred upon the individual subject of reason (Hall, 1992). However, the work of Fanon, Said and Bhabha outlines how concepts of identity have shifted from one which is fixed and unified to something which is increasingly fragmented and de-centred. Stuart Hall (1992) argues that this change is the product of globalisation and within this new concept, identity has no fixed structure or permanent identity, it is 'formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural worlds that surround us', assuming different identities at different times (Hall, 1992:277). Hall continues by outlining five great advances in social theory which had a major impact upon 'thought' in late modernity; thus resulting in the de-centring of the modern 'unified' subject. These included the works of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Ferdinand Saussure, Michel Foucault and Feminism (Hall, 1992). The central thesis of these conceptual shifts is that our identity is mediated between 'self' and 'other' or self and society. Fanon, Said and Bhabha demonstrate these conceptual shifts when discussing the impact of European colonisation and imperialism on the identity of the colonised native people. Their work displays how the Enlightenment subject, with its fixed and stable identity became de-centred into the open, contradictory, unfinished, fragmented identities of the Post-modern subject.

Master/Slave Dialectic

In his book *'Black Skins, White Masks'* Fanon (1986) uses psychoanalytical theories outlined by Jacques Lacan and Freud to explain the feelings of dependency and inadequacy that black people experience in the white world. Furthermore, through Georg Hegel's ideology of the master/slave struggle, Fanon describes how the conceptual underpinnings of colonialism; namely the assumed racial superiority of white European colonisers, caused the non-white colonised peoples to become alienated from their sense of self. Here, Fanon asks 'What does a black man want?' In an attempt to answer this question he turns to psychoanalytical concept of desire which derives from Hegel's (1807) Master/Slave Dialectic. When it encounters resistance from the other, self-consciousness undergoes the experience of desire. This desire is the need for recognition (Kojève, 1980) and according to Bhabha (1994), as soon as we desire, we ask to be considered. When two people first encounter each other, in this case the white man and the black man, they want the other to recognise their

autonomous, objective reality; namely their humanity. In order for this recognition to take place, one man's desire must triumph over the other man's desire for recognition. In other words, one man must come to fear death by the other and see him as master, whilst accepting his position as slave (Kojève, 1980). In Fanon's case the master is the white European coloniser and the slave(s) are the native black Algerians. Through this process the history, culture, language, customs and beliefs of the white coloniser became considered universal, normative and superior to that of the local indigenous culture of the colonised (Fanon, 1986). The white colonisers thought the natives to be vile, barbaric, uncultured and treated them like animals. In light of this, all the black man wants, 'is to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect' (Fanon, 1986:12). However, through the process of colonisation the natives internalised this inferior identity that the coloniser imposed upon them. This internalisation exposed the black man to his split self which can be explained through Lacan's concept of the imaginary.

The Split Self

According to Lacan (2006) there are three different orders that structure our life: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. The symbolic is the order in which individuals have become part of society by entering language and the boundaries between self and other are drawn. Before this stage the child is part of the imaginary. In the imaginary the child cannot conceptualise difference between themselves and others because they imagine the world as one big entity. Through the 'Mirror Stage' Lacan identifies two identifications of the 'Imaginary', namely narcissism and aggressivity. Narcissism results from the child's delight at his image in the mirror, as for the first time he sees himself as an individual human being that is whole and complete. He feels in control. However, aggressivity is directed towards the reflection facing the child in the mirror as he realises that he is still dependent on an elder who holds him up to the mirror, therefore he is not in control. The image in the mirror reveals the child's split self and not only enables 'mastery', but simultaneously a feeling of dependency (Childs and Williams, 1997). In the context of colonisation, the black man had his own identity but is confronted with difference upon meeting the white man. Furthermore the white man denied his

black identity and told him he was an animal. The mirror image created by the white man is monstrous and this is what the black man comes to believe about himself. Thus revealing his split self.

According to Fanon in order to prove to the white men that they were worthy of recognition, the black man tried to elevate above his 'jungle status' and adopt the cultural standards of the mother country (European culture). 'For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white... He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness' (Fanon, 1986:12). This causes the black man's perception of self to split even further, or as Bhabha (1994) argues the black man undergoes a doubling of the self. Bhabha outlines that while the colonised want to remain the same and occupy the colonisers place, they also want to look down at themselves from the place of the coloniser: 'Black skins, white masks is not a neat division; it is a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once' (Bhabha, 1994: 44). It is a splitting (wanting to remain the same but be like the other) and a doubling (wanting to be in two places at once). In striving to be like the other, the black man alienates himself by becoming dislocated from his own history, culture and his black identity. He is neither black, nor white but someone created 'in between' difference. Discussions of the split self, identity created 'in-between' difference and this idea of being in at least two places at once is relevant to this thesis because it mirrors the experiences of migrants and diasporic individuals. Migrants within the host land desire to remain the same which is why diasporas form, yet they also wish to make 'routes' and settle into the host land society. Their identities are renegotiated 'in-between' the tensions of location, culture and belonging, producing something new in-between difference.

From the work of Fanon and the concepts of Freud, Lacan and Hegel, we can see that we do not have a unified, fixed identity from birth. They show that our identity is actually unstable and realised through interaction with 'others'. Through his concept of desire, Freud shows how the split self, namely the id and ego or animal and human self is always there. We learn to suppress our animalistic urges through our desire to be considered human which then allows

us to fit into society. Lacan shows the split, decentred self through the mirror stage of the imaginary. The self is both self-image - the ego - for example, your idea of who you think you are, and the fleshy body - the id - how you look. We need 'others' to affirm our self-image but in the case of Fanon's work we see the problems which arise when the 'other' mirrors back a different self-image. Hegel's concept of the master/slave struggle also shows how we need the 'other', to affirm our identity. The white man is superior and intelligent because he constructed the black man as inferior and monstrous. These ideas are central to the analysis of the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle because as I stated in the introduction the first wave migrants of this Iranian community in Newcastle attempt to fix or essentialise their Iranian identity and that of the diaspora in order to maintain a stable 'whole' cultural identity. This is achieved by placing themselves in opposition to Iranians living under the Islamic republic of Iran, however this is a fantasy of wholeness. With the arrival of further waves of Iranian migrants their fixed 'stable' identity is confronted. The image of 'Iranianess' mirrored back to them by the later waves of Iranian migrants conflicts with their own self-image of 'Iranianess', revealing their split self.

Self and Society

Whilst Fanon showed how the white coloniser constructed the black native as his 'Other' in order to define himself as superior, Said (1978) shows how an entire nation was constructed in order to define what it meant to be 'European'. In his notable book *'Orientalism'*, Said (1978) argues that the Orient was not only adjacent to Europe; it was also its cultural contestant and one of its most reoccurring images of the Other. Just as European identity is built upon national histories, literature, symbols and rituals, so too is the Orient. However, Said demonstrates how the West (Europe) constructed the 'Orient' as its Other in order to define what it means to be European. Said demonstrates how this was achieved through Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony and Foucault's notion of discourse. According to Foucault a discourse is 'a collection of statements unified by the designation of a common object, by particular ways of articulating knowledge about that subject' (Childs and Williams, 1997:98). They operate as self-policing regimes as they establish their own categories of truth whilst discouraging those statements which violate the norms of that particular discourse. For

Foucault knowledge gives rise to power, but it is also produced by operations of power, one does not occur without the other (Childs and Williams, 1997). Said argues that Orientalism is a discourse created by the West which constructs an object of knowledge called the Orient. Due to the power the West had over the East; through the West's ability to travel, trade, study, describe and analyse as they please, the Orient became a geographically demarcated area whose qualities and characteristics Europe then investigated at will. This produced a body of theory, history and practice which constructed the Orient and the East as backwards, lazy, animalistic, un-scientific, exotic and inferior. This not only served the West's ability to gain power over the East but it also served to tell non-western cultures the truth about themselves in a way which was congenial to the West (Childs and Williams, 1997). It produced a collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans (Said, 1978). By constructing the Orient in opposition to Europe, European identity was affirmed as intelligent, scientific, innovative and superior, furthering the production of a European discourse of national culture. The discourse produced by these texts then justified the extension of western power, especially colonialism, and the success of this process confirmed the validity of the knowledge allowing for its future production (Childs and Williams, 1997).

The West and the Rest

Within this concept, identity is about the inside vs. outside, public vs. private. By projecting ourselves into these cultural identities we simultaneously internalise their meanings and values, making them part of ourselves: 'Identity thus stitches the subject into the structure' stabilising the individual and the cultural worlds they inhabit, making them unified and predictable (Hall, 1992:276). In the light of this, society became more aware that this 'inner core' of the subject is not autonomous and self-sufficient but actually mediated to the subject values, meanings and culture of the worlds that the subject inhabits (Hall, 1992). As such, the sociological subject was born and this view acknowledges that identity is formed in the interaction between self and society. The subject still had an inner core which denoted the 'real me' but it was seen as more located and placed within these great supporting structures and formations of modern society (Hall, 1992). These identities were unified under the nation

state, in relation to its 'other'. However, according to Benedict Anderson (1992) the nation is an imagined community which creates a discourse of national culture. National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about the nation with which we can identify. These meanings are contained in the stories which are told about it and memories which connect its past with the present. In this regard the narrative of the nation is built upon the mundane, 'flagged' daily in the life of citizenry, in ways which we have all taken for granted and no longer notice (Billig, 2001). It is told through national histories, literature, symbols and rituals with an emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness. Cultural identity is therefore a product of historical development and varying social, political and economic conditions that is affected by norms, language and religion. People express their cultural identity through beliefs, rituals, traditions and symbols (Hall, 1992). Notably, Anderson (1992) states that the differences between nations reside in how they are imagined. Therefore, different nations construct different cultural identities. This is important for understanding the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle because as stated in the chapter one and two, I argue that the construction of the diaspora is a nostalgic representation of pre-Islamic Iran, created in opposition to the current Islamic state of Iran. It is an 'imagined community' representing an Iran lost in time and space, based on the Persian national culture constructed under the rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi and his son Mohammad Shah Pahlavi. Within the diaspora the continuity of this national cultural identity is presented through the members' beliefs, rituals, traditions and symbols and this will be demonstrated further within my thematic findings in chapter five, six and seven.

Whilst the identity of the modern subject was seen in relation between self and society, throughout the late twentieth century a different picture of subjectivity and identity emerged. This identity is the product of a society which is constantly changing, 'as different areas of the globe are drawn into interconnection with one another, waves of social transformation crash across virtually the whole of the earth's surface' (Giddens, 1990:6). Through these waves of social transformation identity moved from a unified structure under the nation state, to something which is fragmented and de-centred, a hybrid comprising of several identities which

challenged the idea of the nation state as the most self-evident unit of society. This is where the post-modern subject arises.

The Self and its Doubles

The onset of the fragmented and decentred post-modern subject can be explained through the work of Bhabha (1994). He believed that this hybridised concept of identity is formed in a 'third space', 'in-between' the ambivalence of cultural difference. For him, identity is not simply formed between self and other, home culture and alien culture, but between a self and its doubles, a 'mother culture and its bastards' (Childs and Williams, 1997:134).

Psychic Identification and Ambivalence

Influenced by the work of Freud, Bhabha writes about identity in relation to the ambivalence of psychic identification which occurs in relation to the other, as it is only through the 'other' that a subject can locate its desire for difference/recognition while constructing the fantasy of its identity. Ambivalence thus involves a process of identification and of disavowal (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha is interested in how 'subjects are formed 'in-between' or in excess of, the sum of parts of difference' (Bhabha, 1994:2). Like Said, Bhabha uses Foucault to explain how colonial rule is an apparatus of power because its discourse constructs 'a regime of truth' (Said, 1978) on a 'subject peoples' which then produces the colonised as entirely knowable. This is similar to Said's notion of Orientalism, whereby the colonisers intended to control the colonised by finding out everything about them and at the same time using that knowledge to define the colonised in a certain way. However, according to Bhabha, the identity of both the coloniser and colonised are formed as entirely knowable, fixed and unchangeable through the 'stereotype' which wavers between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated in order to be accepted e.g. the black man is a savage animal, the white man is the pinnacle of human achievement. Bhabha links the stereotype to Freud's concept of 'Fetish' and Lacan's 'Imaginary' as both of these psychoanalytical concepts display stereotypical discourse as something which is desired and derided, or, in Freudian terms the stereotype is both a Phobia and Fetish (Bhabha, 1994).

Stereotype and the Fetish

To explain this point Freud argues that when the young boy realises his mother does not have a phallus he fears that his own phallus may be in danger. To manage his anxiety, the boy disavows the mother not having a phallus, therefore denying sexual difference. As a compromise he creates a fetish object that takes the place of the mother's absent phallus. Therefore the child retains the belief that the mother has a phallus while at the same time recognising she does not. The coloniser, in trying to objectify the colonised, creates a stereotype of the colonised in order to reject them as inferior. Freud believed that any object was capable of replacing the phallus but Bhabha argues that a clearly visible part of the 'other', such as the skin, is used to become a fetish (Childs and Williams, 1997). The coloniser creates an image of the colonised and thinks that this image is holistic and pure i.e. not open to ambivalence. However, the stereotype is actually a fantasy of 'wholeness' explained through Lacan's concept of the 'imaginary' and the 'Mirror Stage'.

With regards to the colonial stereotype, for the coloniser there is a need to sustain the holistic image in order to fix the colonised as inferior. However, for the colonised, the completeness and unity of the stereotype is a narcissistic image, but its difference from the colonial subject's experience provokes aggressivity (Childs and Williams, 1997). The mirror image created by the coloniser is not what the colonised think of themselves, but what the coloniser has constructed them as: an animal. The stereotype is alienating and confrontational. This links with the master slave struggle and the need for recognition, i.e. 'I want to be recognised for who I am and not somebody else'. Using Freud's concept of the fetish and Lacan's concept of the imaginary, we can see that the coherence of the stereotype is purely imaginary. Constructing the 'other' in a stereotypical way creates the fantasy of a coherent identity of the colonisers self, an identity that is always in control. However, identity is created through meaning and, according to Derrida (1981 as cited in Hall, 1992), individuals can never finally fix meaning, including the meaning of his or her identity because meaning is unstable. There will always be meanings over which we have no control that prevent our attempts to create a fixed and stable world. Thus, confrontation with the colonised causes the coloniser to see that

this stereotype is an impossible object which is why it needs to be constantly repeated. The difference of the colonised culture displaces the coloniser's own sense of unity and makes the coloniser aware of his split self which desires the colonised to validate the created stereotype in order that he may see the colonised as a fixed object (Bhabha, 1994).

With regards to the Iranian diaspora I argue that the Iranian diaspora is a fetish which allows the first wave Iranians to deny the loss of their homeland (pre-Islamic Iran) in Newcastle. In order to maintain this fetish, the diaspora can be understood as a stereotype which represents an Iran now lost in time or space; this Iran remains only in the past, lodged in the memories and rituals of its former residents which will be outlined in chapter five, six and seven. These collective memories, rituals, symbols and signifiers are reborn as the stereotype and fetish which then serve as the foundation for the reinvention of an Iran which fits in with their holistic imaginings. However, this is a fantasy of wholeness and with the arrival of new Iranian migrants, the identity of the diaspora (based on pre-Islamic Iran) is confronted causing its identity to waiver, revealing that their Iranian cultural identity is not fixed but subject to renegotiation.

Mimicry and Hybridity

As discussed through the work of Fanon, the colonised seek recognition from the coloniser and in order to show they are worthy of recognition they attempt to adopt the language, dress codes and culture of the imperialist nation. Bhabha (1994) describes this as 'Colonial Mimicry'. In '*Black Skins White Masks*', Fanon implies that those who attempt to renounce their blackness and turn white are ridiculed and ostracised by their fellow black brothers. In this sense, mimicry is seen as something negative. However, Bhabha sees mimicry as a strategy of colonial power/knowledge representative of a desire for an approved, recognisable 'other' which also exposes the artificiality of all symbolic expressions of power. Like the stereotype the discourse of mimicry is constructed in ambivalence because it requires a similarity and a dissimilarity: 'a difference that is almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994:86). It relies on resemblance, on the colonised becoming like the coloniser but always remaining different. Through this process the 'authoritative discourse becomes displaced as the coloniser starts to

see traces of himself in the colonised: as sameness slides into otherness' (Childs and Williams, 1997:130).

Fanon believed that through the process of 'Mimicry', the colonised natives lost their black identity which is why they became alienated from their fellow natives. However, Bhabha recognises that mimicry is a process that mimics no fixed, final foundational identity. The coloniser has no pre-existent identity which can be mimicked and the coloniser has no real identity that he or she is betraying through mimicry. Identity is fluid therefore he proposes that in the space of interaction between the indigenous and colonial culture there is a synthesis of the two cultures. In order to be like the coloniser, the colonised use their knowledge of their own culture and adapted it to include aspects of colonial culture. Their new identity becomes a hybrid of the two cultures. Bhabha argues that 'Hybridity' is 'a problematic of colonial representation... that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal. So that other "denied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority' (Bhabha, 1994:156). As with mimicry, the hybridity of colonial discourse reverses the structures of domination in the colonial situation as it has the ability to not only remove the imposed authoritative imperialist culture, but also the ability to deprive its authenticity (Bhabha, 1994).

When applied to diaspora, Bhabha's notion of mimicry is relevant to the ways in which diasporans (re)imagine their homelands in the host land as a way of grounding their cultural identity. This allows them to imagine it as a pure, untainted place from which they can start again. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter in the section 'Theoretical and Empirical Understandings of Home'.

Concluding Remarks

Through Bhabha's work on colonialism and his concept of hybridity, we can see that identity is actually open, unfinished and completely fragmented; a composite of several identities. Therefore, although Iranians from the first wave attempt to fix their Iranian cultural identity, the meaning of our identity cannot be fixed because meaning itself is unstable (Derrida, 1981).

Furthermore, the fact that they re-imagine and reconstruct elements of Iranian culture, tradition and ritual within the UK, highlights their hybridity and the renegotiation of their identity in-between difference. Whilst Fanon (1986) showed how identity was created between self and other and Said (1980) showed how it was created between self and society, Bhabha (1994) presents identity as a doubling, dissembling image formed not only between self-culture and alien culture but between a self and its doubles. Within this concept identity is seen as fluid, allowing us to assume different identities at different times, transforming into something new depending on the cultural worlds which surround us. As stated earlier, it is this concept of identity which influenced post-modernist ideas of diasporic identity to be explored in the following section.

CONCEPTUALISING DIASPORA: A GENEALOGY

In the inaugural issue of the journal *Diaspora* William Safran observed that most scholarly articles discussing ethnicity and immigration paid 'little, if any attention to....diaspora' (1991:93). Ironically, this comment became outdated before it even had the chance to be published, as the 1990s saw a proliferation of research emerge which engaged with the concept, stretching it's meaning in various directions and across an abundance of disciplines. This subchapter aims to provide a genealogy of diaspora in order to demonstrate how the concept has changed over time moving from an essentialised notion, to something which is hybrid and fragmented. This will be broken down into three main sections; The Classic Diasporas, Modern Diasporas and Post-Modern Diasporas. Beginning with its Greek etymological roots, the first section will discuss how diaspora became solely associated with the Jewish experience of exile. As the story unfolds we will see several shifts in the diasporic literature with the first occurring throughout the 1960s and 1970s when the concept was modernised to include other groups of people with similar experiences to the Jewish diaspora. Later in this modern era a further decisive shift occurred when the term was expanded to include groups such as expatriates, refugees, migrants, guest workers and so on. As Brubaker (2004) notes,

'The universalisation of diaspora, paradoxically means the disappearance of diaspora' (Brubaker, 2004:3).

This porosity led some researchers to become fixated on defining diaspora and what it means to be diasporic. It is at this point we begin to see a divergence in the literature with some theorists calling for stringency and thereby essentialising the notion, whilst others attempted to investigate and embrace its heterogeneity. This latter approach to diaspora coincided with post-modern/post-structuralist methods that sought to deconstruct narratives about identity, place and belonging.

The Classic Diasporas

The Jewish Diaspora as the Ideal Type

The term diaspora derives from the Greek word *diaspeirein* which referred to an abrupt but natural process: the fruitful scattering away of seeds from the parent body that both dispersed and reproduced the organism (Toloyan, 1996:10). However, for over two thousand years the term diaspora was used to represent the traumatic upheaval of the Jews as they were exiled from their homeland. This version of the concept is rooted in Deuteronomy from the Old Testament, which outlined forcible dispersion as a form of punishment for those who had forsaken the righteous paths and failed to obey the law of God:

If you do not observe and fulfil all the law.... the Lord will scatter you among all people's from one end of the earth to the other....Among these nations you will find no peace, no rest for the sole of your foot. The Lord will give you an unquiet mind, dim eyes and failing appetite. Your life will hang continually in suspense, fear will beset you night and day, and you will find no security all your life long. Every morning you will say 'would God it were evening!' and every evening 'would God it were morning!' for the fear that lives in your heart (Deuteronomy 28:58-68).

This negative portrayal of diaspora as punishment came to represent the Jewish dispersal from 597BCE when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judea and deported large parts of the Judean upper class. Their second punitive expedition occurred with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 586BC (Boyarin & Boyarin, 1993). Compelled to desert the land promised to them by God, these uprooted Jews exiled to Babylon and beyond (Cohen, 1997) integrating into their host societies. However, religiously, Jews refused to assimilate and maintained the tradition of their forefathers (Baumann, 2010), preserving the law outside of the holy land and living wholeheartedly in accordance with the Torah. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem gave the Jewish diaspora its full and painful meaning, 'the loss of redemptive proximity to the religious centre of Jerusalem' (Toloyan, 1996:10). In time the concept of diaspora became fused with the 'suffering' of exile, including notions of homelessness, isolation, alienation and insecurity of living in a foreign place. A place where individuals were cut off from their roots and their sense of identity. As Cohen notes:

'The sense of unease or difference that members of the diaspora feel in their countries of settlement often results in a felt need for protective cover in the bosom of the community or a tendency to identify closely with the imagined homeland and with co-ethnic communities in other countries' (Cohen, 1997:35).

The alienation they experienced in the host country, and the dislocation of their sense of self, made the need to return to the 'mythical' homeland from which they were banished central to the Jewish Diaspora. Within this version of the concept, diasporic individuals were depicted as pathological half persons, destined never to realise themselves or attain completeness, happiness or tranquillity so long as they were in exile (Cohen, 1997). This return would occur when the time was right in the homeland, but until then there was a need to retain an idealised collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland and a cultural connection to it, in order to remind themselves of where they came from. Classical Jewish experience testifies

to the fact that at the heart of diaspora is an ideology of separation from, and a longing for return, to the homeland (Baumann, 2010).

The Armenian and Greek Diaspora

According to Toloyan (1996) the Jewish centred definition of diaspora prevailed until 'circa 1968' (1996:12), as it was around this time that the term also came to represent other groups with similar experiences to Jewish tradition, particularly experiences of large scale scattering due to home land trauma, collective suffering and a troubled relationship with the host country/society. The groups that were most closely compared to the classical Jewish diaspora were the experiences of the Armenians and the Greeks.

Although the Armenian diaspora has been present for several hundred years, originating through commerce and trade; the modern Armenian diaspora is a product of the massacres which occurred at the hands of the Ottoman empire in the late nineteenth century. Those who were not massacred were deported to Syria or Palestine, and it is widely accepted that over 1 million Armenians were either killed or died of starvation during this mass displacement. The Armenian experience was the twentieth century's first major example of what came to be known as ethnic cleansing (Cohen, 1996).

Conversely, whilst the negative connotations of diaspora (as experienced through the Jewish and Armenian diaspora) reflects the forced dispersion expressed above from Deuteronomy, for the Greeks, the term diaspora was originally found in the Greek translation of the Bible and meant to 'sow widely'. It reflected positive connotations associated with 'expansion through plunder', commonly associated with the colonisation and military conquest of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic period (800-600BC). It is the history of the modern Greek diaspora which reflects the negative connotations of the concept and can be separated into three separate phases by Tziovas (2009). The first phase coincides with the ottoman rule in the mid-fifteenth century to the emergence of the Greek state in 1870; the second extends from the mid- nineteenth century until the beginning of World War II; and the third refers to the period between 1940 -1970, a product of the Civil War in 1948.

These three groups serve as the *classics* or prototypical *archetype* within the diaspora literature, the foundation to which the concept of diaspora was built, however as Clifford (1994) states, 'we should be able to recognise the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora without making that history a definitive model. Jewish (Greek and Armenian) diasporas can be taken as a non-normative starting points for a discourse that is travelling or hybridizing in new global conditions' (1994:306).

Modern Diasporas

After the extension of the term began to include the experiences of the Greeks and Armenians, over the next three decades the modern concept of diaspora was not only used to discuss other experiences of exile and displacement, but also began to encompass a wide range of dispersed peoples. At the launch of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* editor, Khachig Toloyan (1991) spoke of a further decisive shift in focus for diaspora studies as it also began to encompass groups hitherto identified as immigrants, ethnic minorities, exiles, expatriates, refugees, guest workers and such like: 'Where once were dispersions, there now is diaspora' (Toloyan, 1996:3). This is a significant step away from the classical notions of diaspora and its negative connotations as it implies that not all diasporas are the victims of great catastrophes in the homeland but the product of globalisation. Here, improvements in communication technology have enabled people, goods, capital and ideas to move back and forth between multi-located diasporas, their homelands and beyond (Smith & Guarnizo, 2002).

However, with the 'veritable explosion' of interest in diaspora research throughout the 1990s the term proliferated and its meaning was stretched to include various intellectual, cultural and political agendas that described practically any population that was considered de-territorialised or transnational. Brubaker (2004) states that this has resulted in a "Diaspora", Diaspora' – a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space (Brubaker, 2004:1). From his perspective, this 'let-a-thousand-diasporas-bloom' approach has stretched the concept to the point of uselessness (Satori, 1970) because 'If

everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so' and it loses the ability to pick out phenomena (Brubaker, 2004:3).

In attempting to define diaspora, a divergence in the literature began to emerge with some theorists attempting to 'fix' and essentialise the concept through paradigms and typologies (with specific emphasis on homogeneity and homeland origins), whilst others began to celebrate diasporic identity as a fluid entity which is not only heterogeneous and diverse but something which is constantly renegotiated. Most notable from the latter perspective was the development in African studies and the association of diaspora with the racialised politics of the black Atlantic and slavery. Paul Gilroy's book *'The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness'* is one of the most seminal pieces of work on this topic offering a counterculture to modernity and in so doing, contributed towards the growing body of post-modernist diasporic literature emerging throughout the 1990s, which will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter. The next section will attempt to provide an overview of the modern diaspora literature and discuss how this expansion led to a growing body of literature on 'defining' the meaning of diaspora and what it entails.

Essentialism and Diaspora

Paradigms and Typologies

According to William Safran (1991) the concept of diaspora has become a useless metaphor. The labelling of diaspora to almost any group of expatriates or to individual migrants, removed the concept of its historical meaning and led to a conflation of the term which made it impossible to distinguish diasporas from other kinds of minority communities. He states that 'anyone can be an immigrant but it takes a 'special' kind of immigrant to be diasporic' (Safran, 1999:257). In Safran's understanding of diaspora, diasporic immigrants retain a memory of, a cultural connection with, and general orientation towards their homeland. Furthermore, they have institutions reflecting aspects of homeland culture and/or religion as well as a commitment to surviving as a distinct community. However, he places most emphasis on the observation that many diasporic individuals retain a *myth of return* to the homeland (Safran

1991). Using the Jewish Diaspora as the 'ideal type' because of its uniqueness, Safran has outlined distinct criterion to use as a paradigm for comparing diasporas:

1. They, or their ancestors have been dispersed from an original centre to two or more foreign regions.
2. They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements.
3. They believe they are not fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate.
4. Their ancestral home is idealised and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they or their descendants should return.
5. They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance and restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity.
6. They continue to relate to their homeland in various ways and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are defined by the existence of such a relationship.

(Safran, 1999:255).

Another theorist who was influenced by the need to define the concept, as well as delineate one diaspora from another, was Robin Cohen. He created a set of 'common features', as, unlike Safran Cohen recognises that not every diaspora will exhibit every feature listed, nor will they feature to the same degree over time and in all contexts. For Cohen (1997) 'the main strands that go into the making of a diasporic rope' (16) include:

1. Dispersal from original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. Alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;
4. An idealisation of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;

5. The frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in common fate;
7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. A sense of empathy and co- responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and
9. The possibility of a distinctive creative enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

(Cohen, 2008:16).

A further tool used by Cohen (2008) is the use of Weberian ideal types. Using qualifying adjectives such as 'Victim' or 'Imperial', he provided a means of typologising and classifying various diasporas together by highlighting their most important characteristics as seen below:

1. Victim Diasporas, such as the Jewish, Armenians and Africans.
2. Trade Diasporas, which includes the Chinese and Lebanese.
3. Cultural Diasporas, such as those of the Caribbean.
4. Labour and Imperial Diasporas, such as British, Italians and Indians.

(Cohen, 2008:16).

The problem with such models, paradigms and typologies is as James Clifford (1994) indicates, these models are "centred," that is, based on the idea of a communal source or origin: a model with the operative metaphor of roots. It resembles the notion of the nation, a constructed community which unites a people under a common culture. The powerful idea of a dispersed people whose unified consciousness is sustained despite the distressing effects of separation. The maintenance of a real or imaginary bond with the place of origin from which the exiled people were dispersed makes the construction of this unity possible. Essentialist

paradigms such as those outlined above paint diasporas as homogenous entities (Anthias, 1998). However, they are not homogenous as the movements of the population may have taken place at different historical periods and for different reasons. Different host countries provide a multiplicity of social conditions, opportunities and exclusions. Also, diasporas may have formed different collective representations, for example, 'the extent to which they organise around cultural symbols, develop ethnic cultural organisations and promote their ethnic identity will be diverse' (Anthias, 1998:564). Both Saffran and Cohen focus heavily on defining or delineating diasporas on the basis of their dispersal and longing for return to the homeland but according to Clifford:

'Transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland. Decentred, lateral connection may be as important as those formed around the teleology of origin/return, and a shared, ongoing history of displacement, adaption and resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin' (Clifford, 1994:306).

Instead of analysing diasporas through what they all have in common and fixing them into a set of typologies and common features based on their origins, we should also consider what makes them different. How do they adapt and reconstruct themselves within different contexts? What occurs along the interstices of their displacement, between past and present, self and other, host country and homeland? The writings of Post Modern writers such as Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall propose such an interpretation, an understanding that privileges hybridity and heterogeneity. In this sense, diaspora is no longer perceived as unitary; instead, its sociality is seen to be based on movement, interconnection, and mixed references as can be observed through the following notions of identity formation.

Diasporas as Hybrid and Heterogeneous

The Black Atlantic

According to Gilroy the notion of the black Atlantic is described as a counterculture to European modernity, the project of Enlightenment and its commitment to scientific reasoning.

Instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, the notion of the black Atlantic suggests that identity is a production, which is never complete and always in process. It argues against essentialist pitfalls that see cultural identity, racial identity and racial nationalism as fixed, unwavering, stable positions which represent the one true self or one true nation. Paul Gilroy (1993) and Stuart Hall (1992) argue that cultural identity is not only formed by similarity, such as common shared historical experiences and shared cultural codes of a 'people', but also recognises points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we have become' through the different contexts we find ourselves in. They argue that cultural identity belongs to the future as much as to the past because it is subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power, not fixed in some essentialised past. Instead he focused on *positionings*; for 'histories have their real, material and symbolic effects' (1990:226).

Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other peoples into the sea. This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising form of 'ethnicity'.....The diaspora experience as I intend here, is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by conception of identity which with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (Hall, 1990:235).

In this regard, Gilroy argues that the Black Atlantic is a diaspora which shares the common history of slavery; however it is comprised of black people from different parts of Africa, from different villages and tribal communities, with different languages, cultures, Gods and so on. The uprooting of slavery as well as the transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy of the western world unified people across their differences, in the same moment as it cut off their past (Hall, ib). Through what Gilroy (1993) describes as the middle passage (travelling via ship across the Atlantic), these differences came into contact and cultures

synthesised, creating something new, something *in-between* difference (The Black Atlantic). Something that is not specifically African, American, Caribbean, or British, but all of these at once; a black Atlantic culture whose themes and techniques transcend ethnicity and nationality to produce something new. This *in-between* is what Homi Bhabha (1994) refers to as the third space, a space in which hybridity occurs. This hybrid, heterogeneous culture joins diverse communities in North and South America, the Caribbean, Europe and Africa. Where these cultures become connected, a complex picture of cultural exchange and continuity is created (Pattie, 1999). What emerges, therefore, is an “intercultural” culture, a counterweight to ethnicisms and nationalisms (Chivallon, 2002), and a continuity of a ‘people’ without recourse to land, race or kinship as primary ‘grounds’ of continuity (Clifford, 1994).

Double Consciousness

To further emphasise the fluidity, heterogeneity and multiplicity of diasporic cultural identity is the notion of double consciousness which W.E.B DuBois (1989) describes as:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn’t bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an

American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.

(Du Bois, 1989).

This is similar to Homi Bhabha's interpretation of Frantz Fanon's book '*Black Skins, White Masks*', that it is not a neat, dichotomous division but a doubling, dissembling image of being in two places at once (Bhabha, 1994: 44). As Bhabha and Du Bois (1994) demonstrate, cultural identity is not only formed between self-culture and alien culture, but between a self and its doubles. It is in constant renegotiation, leaving it open and unfinished, not fixed and unified. It is based on the future as well as the past. We assume different identities at different times, transforming into something new depending on the cultural worlds which surround us, as demonstrated through Paul Gilroy's work on the black Atlantic. It is these ideas of fluidity and hybridity which gave rise to the post-modern notion of diaspora, departing from the fixed and clearly defined ideas of the modern notion of diaspora.

Diasporic cultural identity teaches us that cultures are not preserved by being protected from 'mixing' but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing (Boyarin and Boyarin, 1993:71).

Post-Modern Diasporas

Post Modern scholars such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Avtar Brah, Floya Anthias, James Clifford and Homi Bhabha attempted to deconstruct and re-appropriate the necessary relationship between, and scholarly focus upon ethno-religious communities and their homeland origins. As described above, they see diaspora as a connection between groups across different nation states whose commonality derives from an original but maybe removed homeland: a new identity becomes constructed on a world scale which crosses national boundaries (Anthias, 1999). This contests the idea of the nation state as the most self-evident unit of society because it implies populations that share a common identity as a nation, also identify with the government of the territory in which they reside. However, diasporas are defined as continuing to belong to the society from which they originated and have rights and

responsibilities in their home state as well as, in the host country. Diasporas and diasporic identity are therefore created in the tensions between location, culture and belonging. As Esman (2009) explains, diasporic migrants are economically and occupationally in the host country, but socially and culturally still in the old country. In this sense, diaspora opens up a rift between place of residence and place of belonging (Gilroy, 1993).

Homing Desire

One of the first things to be addressed by post-modern writers was the concepts focus on diasporic individuals 'need' or 'longing' to return to the homeland. For Brah (1996) the concept of diaspora 'emerges an ensemble of investigative technologies that historicise trajectories of different diasporas, mapping their relationality and interrogating what the search for origins signify in the history of a particular diaspora, as well as how and why originary absolutes are imagined' (196). She suggests a more genealogical or historically aware approach to diaspora. It is not about who travels but when, how and under what circumstances. The focus here is to look at what diaspora does, rather than what it is. This allows us to explore the subjectivity of the diasporans themselves, to understand their practices, interactions and experiences as well as the ways in which they are constructing their diaspora. In a similar vein Raman (2001:16) suggests,

'The expression of diaspora is a consequence of a complex set of historical circumstances. Migration itself does not give rise to diasporic identification. Diasporic consciousness is, rather, created at certain moments in time because of a confluence of circumstances. A diaspora is characterised by the historical contingency of its 'moment', and tends to manifest itself at times of 'need'. The 'truths' of any form of diasporic identity emerge for multiple historical reasons [...] It is not so much what diaspora 'is', but rather, what it 'does' that is of interest'.

It is within these confluences of circumstances that the narrativity of a diasporic community is imagined, constituted in the vessels of everyday life and the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively (Brah, 1996). The global Iranian diaspora was mainly a

consequence of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, when Iranian migrants dispersed around the world realised their stay in the host land was going to be permanent, rather than temporary. In light of this, there became a desire to create a 'cohesive' Iranian community in Newcastle. A need to maintain aspects of Iranian culture, tradition and language, as well as create institutions catering towards their cultural and religious needs. The desire to create a home away from home. As already mentioned, the question of home is linked to our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of belonging – roots and routes. Brah (1996) argues that the concept of diaspora places the discourse of home and dispersion in creative tension 'inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins' (1996:193). As stated above, not all diasporic homing desires are intrinsic to a return to the homeland, the orientation towards the homeland centre could be symbolic, imagined, ritual or religious (Tololyan, 1996). For example, Pnina Werbner has shown in her work on South Asian diaspora, cultural identification is by far the most important element and as you will see with the Newcastle Iranian diaspora, Iran as home is linked to a need to reimagine and reconstruct a Persian cultural identity symbolic of a pre-Islamic Iran, thereby highlighting that diasporas are complex and chaordic entities without a centre.

Chaordic and Complex Diasporas

Chaordic and complex diasporas are concepts discussed in the work of Pnina Werbner and her extensive literature on South Asian diasporas. She argues that diasporas are chaordic because the locations of diasporas are autonomous of any centre, yet on the same hand they continue to recognise a centre. Diasporas are complex and segmented because they are characterised by multiple discourses, internal dissent and competition for members but they all identify under the same diaspora, 'therefore what is subsumed under one identity, such as the 'Iranian diaspora', is a multiplicity of opinions, traditions, subcultures, hybrid inventions, lifestyles and modes of existence (Werbner, 2002:123). The contradictory and mutually antagonistic discourses and practices which play out within diaspora will be discussed in more detail in chapter five when I discuss the ways in which intergenerational conflict occurs through conflicting perceptions of 'Iran as home', and conflicting ideas of what it means to be an Iranian.

Concluding Remarks

Whilst the identity of the colonised was created in tension between their own self-image and the image mirrored back to them in the eyes of the other/coloniser, diasporic identity is created in the tensions between location, culture and belonging. When you move away from the cultural worlds which define your identity, you become disconnected from your sense of self which arises from a loss of belonging. Diasporas form within the 'in-betweens', through tensions between their idea of *home in the homeland* and their desire to create a *home in the host country*, creating something new, in-between difference which allows them to re-negotiate their cultural identity and create a sense of belonging in a new place. Chapter five of this thesis will document the emergence of this Newcastle Iranian diaspora focussing on the ways in which it was formed 'in-between' their experience of pre-Islamic Iran as home, and their desire to create a home in the UK. This is what Bhabha terms as the 'third' space, 'halfway between...being not defined' (Bhabha, 1994:13). These hybrid transnational diasporas are 'deterritorialised' imagined communities 'which consider themselves as, despite their dispersal, sharing a collective past and common destiny' (Werbner, 2002:121). Members of diasporas are pulled in multiple directions and in order to understand how these Iranians renegotiate their identity in the UK, it is important to understand where these Iranians feel they belong and where they call home. This will be explored in chapter seven through the ways in which Iran as home is practised, performed, reimagined and reconstructed within in Newcastle. However, first it is important to highlight the ways in which 'home' has been discussed theoretically and investigated empirically.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF HOME

In order to understand where Iranians in the UK call home, or to where they feel a sense of belonging, we must first make sense of 'home' as a theoretical concept and how it is portrayed in literature. Over the last three decades there has been a proliferation of writing on the meaning of home as a subject for empirical investigation and theoretical exploration within the

disciplines of sociology, anthropology, social psychology and human geography (Somerville, 1992; Mallet, 2004). Much like the concepts of diaspora and identity, the idea of 'home' appears to be an overloaded, convoluted, and at times, a contradictory term, which combines spatial, social, psychological and temporal aspects.

There have been three comprehensive critical literature reviews on the meaning of home over the last 25 years. According to Despres (1991) home means, or is associated with: material structure, permanence and continuity, security and control, refuge, status, family and friends, reflection of self, centre of activities and a place to own. Somerville (1992) shortens these ideas of home to shelter, hearth, heart, haven, abode, privacy and roots. Whilst Mallet (2004) displays how home is conflated with house, notions of the ideal, haven, expressions or symbols of self and a state of being-in-the-world. Therefore, the varied literature on this topic raises questions as to whether or not home is: (a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of being in the world whether this is real, ideal or imagined (Mallet, 2004). For example, according to Critical Human Geographers Blunt and Dowling (2006), home is 'a place/site, a set of feelings/cultural meanings, and the relations between the two', but Social Constructionists such as Saunders and Williams take a macro-sociological approach arguing that (1988) the 'home is perceived as a locale, "the crucible of the social system" (85) representing a vital interface between society and the individual. It is invested with diverse cultural meanings that differ within, and between households as well as across cultural and social settings' (Cited in Mallet, 2004:68).

Many authors also consider notions of creating or making home, embodying home and the ideal home (Mallet, 2004, Ahmed 1999, Chapman & Hockey 1999). Furthermore, home is often conflated with house, family, haven, self, gender and journeying, as well as the nation or country of birth. 'Home' is therefore a contested, complex, multi-layered and multi-disciplinary concept. Given this bewildering array of uses it could be suggested that the concept of home becomes an empty one, one which can mean anything and in consequence signify nothing (Stock, 2010). So why do researchers continue to study ideas of home? As Somerville (1997) states, it is important to understand 'what home means to different people and to attempt to

explain the range of different meanings that we find' (1997:115), whilst also considering the social and discursive field that impinge upon and frame their experience (Mallet, 2004; Somerville, 1997; Stock, 2010). The aim of this chapter is to outline some of the ways that home is conceptually represented in the literature and how this is intrinsically linked to notions of diaspora and identity.

Fixity versus Fluidity

As we have discussed in the sections on diaspora and identity concepts, early research indicates an overarching relationship between identity and fixity. Within the concept of home, it is the idea of finding a stationary point in the environment to necessitate one's moving, perceiving, ordering and constructing (Rapport & Dawson, 1998). In the construction of cultures, societies, nations and ethnic groups, being at home, in conventional anthropological understanding, was the same as being environmentally fixed, stationary or centred. As the stable centre of one's universe it represented a safe, and still place to leave and return to, whether this was a house, village, region or nation. Home begins by bringing some space under control (Douglas, 1991) and as Mallet (2004) outlines home is often conflated with house, within which time and space were structured functionally, economically and aesthetically (Douglas, 1991).

In an attempt to broaden the definition of home and clarify the relationship between home and physical shelter, Saunders and William (1988) endeavoured to distinguish between house, home and household. Using Giddens' (1984) concept of the locale where he states 'a house is grasped as such only if the observer recognises that it is a dwelling with a range of other properties specified by the modes of its utilisation in human activity' (1984:118), they attempt to show how home is more than bricks and mortar, it is where the heart is. They go on to describe 'home' as 'a spatial and social unit of interaction', 'the active and reproduced fusion' of household and house (1988:88). The concepts of household (as social unit) and house (as physical unit) are therefore crucial to the description of home, but is home always constituted in this way? And what does this tell us theoretically or conceptually? According to Somerville (1992) it tells us nothing. In response to Saunders and Williams research agenda on 'home',

Somerville points out that the authors fail to fully appreciate the ideological character of 'home' stating 'if home is where the heart is, how is it possible for it to be a socio-spatial system, let alone a fusion of house and household?' (1992:115). Somerville (1992) argues that it is irrelevant as to whether or not home is a socio-spatial system, what is important is to analyse what home means to different people and attempt to explain the range of different meanings that we find. By conceiving home as real fixed object – a socio-spatial system – they fail to appreciate that the home must also be understood as an ideal place, whose character is to be determined by reference to its social context i.e. the institutions and ideologies which are dominant in society.

As shown in the previous two subchapters this relationship between identity and fixity has been challenged through the relationship between identity and movement. Massey (1992, 1994) writes that,

'there is no single simple authenticity – a unique eternal truth of an (actual remembered/imagined) place or home – to be used as a reference either now or in the past. The identity of place is always in flux, making the boundaries of place and/or home permeable and unstable' (1994:119).

Places have no fixed or essential past as the identity of a place is always constructed and negotiated. Massey (1992), Ahmed (1999) and Hooks (1990) assert that home is not necessarily a singular place or state of being precisely because it may be one's country, city or town, where one's family live or comes from and/or where one usually lives. These all hold differing symbolic meaning and salience. Focus has therefore, shifted from the routinisation of space and time, to the fluidity of people's movement through them. 'Not only can one be at home in movement, but movement can be one's very home' (Rapport & Dawson, 1998:27). As Berger (1984) describes, in a world full of travellers home comes to be found in a routine set of practices, a repetition of habitual interactions, in memories and myths and in the stories which we carry with us, 'one is at home not in a thing or place but in life being lived in movement

(1984:64). Rapport and Dawson (1998) reinforce this point by arguing that home encompasses:

'cultural norms and individual fantasies'. Home brings together memory and longing, the ideational, the affective and the physical, the spatial, the temporal, the local, the global, the positively evaluated and the negatively' (8).

Phenomenology vs Social Constructionism

Phenomenology of home looks at home as a state of being in the world, not necessarily bounded by a physical location. Phenomenologists do not attempt to define the essence of home or circumscribe people's experience. Instead they focus on the ways in which it is practiced and the diverse ways people do and feel home (Guerny, 1997; Jackson, 1995), rather than the ways that they think about home. However, this thesis will look at both of these, it will look at the ways in which Iranians think about home and also the ways in which home is lived in the moment through routine practices of Iranian culture, habitus, ritual and tradition. As such home is grounded less in a place and more in an activity that occurs in the place. It is not simply a person, a thing, or a place but rather it relates to the activity performed by, with, or in persons, things and places. It is lived in the tension between the given and chosen, then and now, here and there – a dialectical experience. However, Somerville (1997) notes that phenomenological approaches often fail to adequately consider the social and discursive fields that impinge upon and frame experience which is why I wish to understand how Iranians in Newcastle perceive and articulate home.

Some researchers avoid using phenomenological and social constructionist theories together as they claim they come from contradicting perspectives. However, many researchers and theorists of home slip between and/or employ the two approaches. Gurney (1997) employs a range of methods including in-depth interviews, episodic ethnographies and survey data to analyse how people make sense of home through lived experience. Whilst coming from a phenomenological approach, his work is premised on the belief that the worlds people inhabit are socially constructed. People make sense of these socially constructed worlds through lived

experience. He argues that home is an ideological construct that emerges through, and is created from, people's lived experience.

'Human beings are home makers. We make our homes. Not necessarily by constructing them, although some people do that. We build the intimate shell of our lives by organisation and furnishing of the space in which we live. How we function as persons is linked to how we make ourselves at home. We need time to make our dwelling into a home. Our residence is where live, but our home is how we live' (Ginsburg, 1998:31).

Somerville (1992) also argues that home is an ideological construct but rejects the idea that home is only established experientially.

'Home is not just a matter of feelings and lived experience but also of cognition and intellectual construction: people may have a sense of home even if they have no experience or memory of it. We cannot know what home really is outside of these ideological structures (530). What is most important is to consider 'what home means to different people and to attempt to explain the range of different meanings that we find' (115).

He suggests a conceptual construction of the meaning of home. Positing a multi-disciplinary hybrid approach that attempts to reconcile and integrate phenomenological theories with constructivist sociological analyses of the meaning of home. In light of this, this thesis will observe the lived experience of home through participant observation and discuss what home means to the members of this diaspora through their biographical interviews. One of the main ways in which home is observed within this diaspora is through their use of Persian Material Culture.

Home and Material Culture

'The ideal home is not just a house which offers shelter, or a repository that contains material objects...home is a place where personal and social meaning are grounded' (Papastergiadis, 1998:2).

According to Blunt and Dowling (2006) one of the most defining features of home is that it is both material and imaginative. We create comfort through the material. The material form of home is dependent on what home is imagined to be, and the imaginaries of home are influenced by physical forms of dwelling (Blunt and Dowling 2006). In this sense home does not simply exist, it is made. People create home through social and emotional relationships, as well as through material culture. 'Home is lived; what home means and how it is materially manifest are continually created and recreated through everyday practices' (Wood and Beck, 1994).

Focussing on cultural practices that occur within, and create house as home, Miller argues that 'because our social worlds are constituted through materiality (1998:3), objects and things are 'employed to become fabric of cultural worlds' (1998:6). This is similar to the work of Tolia-Kelly (2010) who argues, home possessions act as a 'trigger' which enable re-memory and narrated histories. Studying South Asian women living in North London Tolia-Kelly (2004) found that possessions operate as material codes that symbolise the diasporic journey because they are connective markers to geographical areas of identification. These visual and material cultures help situate diasporic groups politically and socially within structures of feeling that have evolved through their varied relationships with cultural identity. 'A sense of nation, belonging and citizenship are figured through these active materials in the home environment'.

Similarly, in her study of material culture in the Jewish diaspora, Hart (2008) found that objects such as paintings, books, décor and religious artefacts act as a connection to 'a long gone Israel....a visual tie to an ancient past' (Hart, 2008:8-9). People keep and display objects which represent their Jewishness to show where they come from; their lineage and genealogy. These objects act as a reminder of, and also portray narrations of the individuals' past and aid them in negotiating their identity in the present. This is what Bhabha refers to as the uncanniness of the migrant experience. It repeats a life lived in the country of origin but this

repetition is not identical, introducing difference and transformation; also this difference in repetition is a way of reviving that past life, of keeping it alive in the present.

According to McCracken (1988) such objects act as a bridge between the real and the ideal home. Through displaced meaning strategy a culture can remove its ideals and place them somewhere safe and out of harm's way into the past or future. Individuals discover a personal golden age in which life conformed to their fondest expectation e.g. happy years of childhood or if they cannot find a spot in the past, the future proves accommodating e.g. when I get married or when I buy a house. As I will discuss in the next section, Iranians in Newcastle hold on to their ideal of Iran as home from a past pre-Islamic Iran. Through objects or goods they are able to entertain the connection that present circumstances now deny them. 'When called to mind these objects allow the individual to rehearse a much larger set of possessions, attitudes, circumstances and opportunities' (McCracken, 1988:110). For example, an individual may reflect on the eventual possession of house, in this reflection the house becomes the ideal for the perfect family, perfect partner and therefore the perfect life. Objects become synecdoches of meaning (McCracken, 1988) and allow Iranians to re-connect to their ideal 'imagined' home as a means of renegotiating their cultural identity.

Within diaspora the concept of home therefore emerges as a highly contextual and ambivalent notion, referring to multiple places and spaces in past, present and future in various ways. Home can be remembered, lived and longed for. Notions of home are fluid and bound to change as one moves in time and space. Rather than referring to one single home, in diasporic settings feelings of belonging can be directed towards both multiple physical spaces and remembered, imagined and/or symbolic spaces (Al-Ali and Koser 2002). Therefore, it is the purpose of this thesis to look at the ways in which Iran as home is remembered within Newcastle in order to create a sense of belonging in the UK.

The Ideal, Remembered and Imagined

'In some sense, the narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home, too many places in which memories attach themselves through the carving out of inhabitable space, and hence no place in which memory can allow the past to reach the present. The movement between homes hence allows Home to become a fetish, to become separated from the particular worldly space of living *here*, through the possibility of some memories and the impossibility of others. Home becomes the impossibility and necessity of the subjects' future, rather than the past which binds the self to a given place' (Ahmed, 2004:331).

As already discussed, diasporas form around their common heritage, their shared experience of migration and experience of trauma in the homeland as well as, their need to sustain home culture as a way of remembering their imagined home (Anderson, 1992). This is the case even if they have adopted the language and culture of their new host country and have become legal citizens in their new home (Smith and Guarnizo, 2002). Esman (2009) argues that by recreating their home culture in the host country, they are provided with a sentimental link to the homeland, whether this is a real or imagined homeland. This sentiment is also expressed by Tucker (1994) who indicates that 'home-searching is a basic trait of human nature', suggesting that 'most people spend their lives in search of home at the gap between the natural home and the particular ideal home where they would be fully fulfilled' (1994:184). This may be a sentimental and nostalgic journey for a lost time and space, for example, as you will see in chapter five, I argue that the Newcastle Iranian diaspora, like an Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles, is a nostalgic representation of an 'imagined' pre-Islamic Iran. Pre-Islamic Iran no longer exists in time or space, it exists only in the memories and imagination of those living in the diaspora. This idea of Iran as home is not only based on a place or physical space, it is a set of practices which are performed through culture, tradition and ritual of everyday life which mimic an 'original' lost in time and space. Somerville (1992) argues that the concepts of home as ideal and home as reality are integral to the social construction of this term. Writing from a phenomenological perspective Jackson (1995) states that 'home is

always lived as a relationship, a tension [...] home always begets its own negation (122). Both of these authors promote a way of understanding home that uses the ideas of the real, ideal and the imagined in tension rather than opposition and this will be explored in chapter five, as I demonstrate how the Iranian diaspora is formed in the tensions between their reimagined idea of Iran as home and their desire to create a home in the UK. This echoes the migrants condition in Salman Rushdie's 'Imaginary Homelands':

'Our identities are at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel like we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools'.

The relationship between memory and home is complex and fluid, therefore it must take into account the significance of home experiences and memories at various stages of the life cycle which is why I used narrative methods as a form of data collection. A narrative can itself be conceived of as a form of movement. It has been defined as 'the telling (in whatever medium, though especially language) of a series of temporal events so that a meaningful sequence is portrayed – the story or plot of the narrative (Kerby 1991:39). Also narrative is a cultural form that is capable of expressing coherence through time (Crites, 1971). To recount a narrative, in short, is both to speak of movement and to engage in movement. Narrative mediates one's sense of movement through time, so that in the telling one becomes, in Rushdie's observation, an émigré from a past home. (1991:12). According to Kerby (1991) it is the narrative that tells the self of the narrator. The self arises out of signifying practices, come to know itself and the world through encultured narrational acts. In a particular environment or context, the self is given content, it is delineated and embodied. 'It is in and through various forms of narrative employment that our lives – our very selves – attain meaning (Kerby, 1991:3). As they narrate their story they are telling it anew, making sense of their experiences and continuously renegotiating and reconstructing their habitation in reality. They are home in personal narratives that move away from any notion of fixity, and their identities derive from telling moving stories of themselves and their world views (Rapport & Dawson, 1998).

The Uncanny

It is the 'real' home, the very space from which one imagines oneself to have originated, and in which one projects the self as both homely and original, that is the most unfamiliar: it is here that one is guest, relying on the hospitality of others. It is the home which, in the end becomes Home through the very failure of memory. The very failure of individual memory is compensated for by collective memory, and the writing of the history of the nation, in which the subject can allow themselves to fit in by being assigned a place in a forgotten past (Ahmed, 2004:330).

Freud holds that the uncanny is that type of dread which returns to us that is long familiar. The uncanny, in that sense, is something new that exists in something already known. This uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality, such as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes, and so on (Freud, 1919).

As stated within the introduction, I argue that the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle is a nostalgic representation of pre-Islamic Iran. It is a fetish which allows them to deny the loss of their homeland culture and history with the creation of the Islamic Republic. In order to maintain this fetish, the diaspora is a stereotype which represents an imaginary Iran which no longer exists; it serves as the foundation for the reinvention, or transportation of Iran to a new place. An Iran which fits in with their holistic imaginings and aids them in creating a sense of home and belonging in the UK. However, this repetition of a life lived in the country of origin is not identical to the origin, introducing difference and transformation and invoking uncanniness. This mimicry provides a doubling, dissembling image of being in two places at once, of being the same, but not quite the same; of straddling two cultures, but falling between two stools. The diaspora is homely in the one sense because it connects them to their reimagined idea of Iran as home, however at the same time it is also unhomely because it is a reminder that that Iran no longer exists.

'If the canny is homely, what is close to home, it none the less has a tendency to morph into the profoundly unfamiliar, the unhomely, which alienates or estranges us from what we thought was most properly our own' (Huddart, 2006).

The uncanny occurs when we have our relationship to the present brought into question, and this will be observed in chapter five with the arrival of third wave Iranian migrants to Newcastle. The third wave question the first waves relationship to Iran as home (fetish), and confront the stereotype of the diaspora and their cultural identity. This is similar to Bhabha's notion of mimicry and ambivalence 'as sameness slips into otherness' 'almost the same but not quite' and how this confronts the split self. The third wave Iranians are 'almost the same but not quite', this doubling arouses a feeling of the uncanny because when one possesses knowledge, feeling and experience in common with the other (third wave Iranians), and identifies him/herself with another person, his self becomes confounded, or the foreign self is substituted for his own, in other words, by doubling, dividing and interchanging (renegotiating) the self.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the concepts which are central to this thesis, namely Identity, Diaspora and Home and Belonging. The research question asks 'how do Iranians renegotiate their cultural identity within the UK?'. Through these concepts I have tried to demonstrate how Iranians renegotiate their identity within the 'in-betweens' of multiple cultures, locations and senses of belonging. Upon moving from Iran, Iranians are temporarily disconnected from their sense of self due to a loss of belonging. In order to renegotiate their Iranian culture identity and make routes into UK society, they need to feel a sense of home and belonging. To do this they look to prior homes and notions of 'where we came from' which leads to them re-imagining aspects of Iran in the UK, creating a diaspora. This diaspora is created in the tensions between location, culture and belonging, it is a space in which hybridity occurs mirroring Bhabha's third space, by creating something new 'in-between' difference. It

serves as a bridge between their idea of Iran as home and their desire to create a sense of home and belonging in the UK, providing them with a space in which to renegotiate their cultural identity and make routes into UK society.

To explore these tensions, the findings from this ethnography will be separated into three thematic sub chapters: Diaspora and the Search for Belonging; Hybridity and the Third Space: Renegotiating Identity in the 'In-betweens' and; Performing Identity: Reimagining Iran as Home in Newcastle. Chapter five provides a genealogy of the Newcastle Iranian diaspora focussing on its construction as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1994) based on their reimagining and memories of Iran as home. Chapter six will explore the renegotiation of their cultural identity and how this was aided by the diaspora, the MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism, as well as their sentimental connections to their idea of Iran as home. Chapter seven will demonstrate the ways in which the members of this diaspora perform their identity by remaining connected to their idea of Iran as home through Persian material culture, tradition, ritual and culture.

However, before discussing the findings of this study it is necessary to outline the ways in which the research was conducted and the context in which the Newcastle Iranian diaspora was studied. Therefore, the next chapter will introduce the methodology of ethnography and its significance in achieving the aims and objectives outlined in the introductory chapter. It will also discuss the methods used to support the ethnography, namely observer as participant observation, visual methods and biographical interviews. Such methods allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the everyday activities of this community, as well as how they narrate their identity. For example, biographical interviews not only provided an account of how Iranians have lived their life in the UK, but also outlined their life in Iran and their process of migration. Whereas, observer as participant observation and visual methods allowed me to actively participate in the research as well as, enable me to witness the ways in which ideas of home, being Iranian and living in the UK are practised, performed, reimagined and reconstructed.

Chapter Four: Methodology & Methods

Introduction

As I have argued in the literature review, identity, home and belonging – the underlying concepts of the diaspora arc - are complex processes which are constantly being renegotiated and recreated as people make sense of their experiences. After all, the inspiration for this thesis stems from my memories and experiences with the Iranian community I have grown up alongside. I use the word alongside because although my father is Iranian and a prominent member of this community, I have never been fully immersed into the Iranian way of life, the community itself or Iranian culture. I have mainly sat on the fringes of this community looking in, knowing I am like them but also not quite like them (Bhabha, 1994). Before I began this ethnography I knew very little about the meanings behind Iranian cultural rituals and traditions. Furthermore, I had only visited Iran and my family residing there on two occasions, once as a child and the other as an adult. It was my trip as an adult (23 years old) which inspired this thesis as whilst I was there I found myself questioning my identity and renegotiating my identity in order to adapt to this somewhat familiar but also extremely foreign culture and experience. I felt like I had to change, like I couldn't be myself around my family or Iranian society, or more to the point, I couldn't fully express who I was, it was as if I was lost in translation. I wanted to show myself but also felt that I needed to be more like them, I had a desperate desire to fit in and be accepted, to blend in. For example, I wanted to dress more like my female family members but at the same time I wanted to display my individualistic style, yet my wardrobe and style were not appropriate for Iranian society where women have to cover all of their skin and hair. I felt torn and a deep sense of dislocation as I usually thrive on being different and not following the 'norm', whether this is through a hairstyle or sense of dress. For the first time, I wanted to be the 'norm', I wanted to look like I belonged. Why did this displacement make me feel this urge to 'fit in', why did I feel like I couldn't be

myself? Although I was only visiting Iran, Ghorashi (2004) states that as people begin their lives in a new society, they face multiple new settings, various choices and 'different bases for negotiation between past and present' (Ghorashi, 2004). In Iran I had nothing which I could relate to, nothing that buffered my identity, I was out of place in an unfamiliar space with different cultural norms, societal rules and way of life. In order to be able to renegotiate my identity in this new place, I felt like I needed to try and 'fit in' and adapt to an Iranian way of life.

Furthermore, I visited Iran in 2009 at a time when there were hostile relations between Iran and the West. Media in the UK portrayed Iran in a negative light, indicating they were the next terrorists to tame. This was concerning to me because I was unaware as to how westerners would be treated in Iran. Would people be able to tell I was from England just by looking at me? Would I be treated in a negative way because of this ongoing conflict between the west and Iran? No is the answer, but it was from these experiences in Iran that I started to analyse my Iranianess at home and the impact it may have had on my sense of self. Furthermore, I began to consider how I behaved within different contexts; with my family in Iran, the Iranian community in Newcastle upon Tyne and the British society I had predominantly grown up in. This then led me to wonder about the Iranian community I had grown up alongside. How was this community constructed and why? How had these Iranians felt whilst they settled into life in the UK? and what were the processes they went through whilst they renegotiated their identity in this new space? Furthermore, I was particularly interested in how they renegotiated their Iranian cultural identity in a place that was in conflict with their homeland, a place which painted Iranians in a negative light. As stated in previous chapters, ideas of home and belonging are intimately entwined with our identity, therefore in order to understand how the individuals in the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne renegotiate/ reconstruct their cultural identity in the UK, this project aimed to access participants' perspectives on the following:

- Understanding of home and where they consider home.
- Connections to their homeland and family they left behind.

- Whether there is a sentimental link to the homeland which aids their adaptation to the UK.
- To what extent Iranian culture, traditions and rituals are maintained whilst integrating into UK society.
- To where they feel a sense of belonging.
- To what extent Iranians feel embedded into the British nation.

Previous researchers of the Iranian diaspora such as Sullivan (2001) used biographical interviews to gain insight into the lives of Iranians from three perspectives. The first was their experience of life in Iran, the second was their experience of the turmoil created through and after the Iranian revolution of 1979, and the third perspective was how those same Iranians integrated into societies in USA. Aidani (2010) conducted similar types of interviews but due to his background in theatrics he also helped his interviewees create a play to express their feelings of displacement and cultural trauma. His research brings attention to questions about identity, hospitality and how the 'west' welcomes people, or doesn't in this case.

Using an Iranian diasporic community in Los Angeles, California, Ghorashi (2004) observed various different Iranian festivals, one of them being the Iranian New year celebration 'Nowruz'. Ghorashi (2004) investigated the impact of this festival and other Iranian cultural ceremonies, on the creation of a sense of belonging by Iranian women living in California. She used a range of field methods and techniques including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and short interviews on specific topics. The focus of her research was on the Iranian community in general. All of these researchers used an interpretative approach and methods such as natural observation and in-depth interviews to gain insight into the Iranian diasporic communities.

In light of this previous research and the objectives outlined above this project used an interpretive approach utilising ethnography as the methodology to study the Iranian community in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Ethnography

Ethnography as a methodological approach only emerged in the late nineteenth century but the practice of ethnography as a research method, a tool to collect data, has occurred for centuries. Throughout the late nineteenth century it developed into a methodology, with its own theoretical, ethical, political and philosophical orientations between researcher and research (Scott- Jones & Watt, 2010). Traditional methodological assumptions that researcher should remain objective and at a distance from research participants is being gradually replaced by the acceptance that an ethnographer's self affects every aspect of the research process from conception to final interpretation and beyond (Coffey, 1999:6). As Karim (1993) indicates, and as I have discussed throughout the previous chapters, it has become increasingly obvious that the relationship between self and other is not a distinct binary of oppositions and that it is no longer clear who is who and who exactly is being studied (1993:248). Like Bhabha (1994) suggests our 'selves' are multiple and ever changing/evolving depending on the context we find ourselves in, we constantly move between identities and statuses.

Previously the notion of 'going native' and becoming completely immersed within the culture one was studying, was perceived as dangerous to the validity of the research due to a lack of objectivity. However, in order to study culture, practice, ritual, tradition and indeed, everyday life, one has to observe it as it happens in context and the ways in which one observes culture has changed dramatically since its inception in anthropology. Cultural anthropology and in the past anthropology, was populated by four archetypes: the amateur observer, the armchair anthropologist, the professional ethnographer and the 'gone native' fieldworker (Tedlock, 1991). Eighteenth to early nineteenth century amateur field accounts were generally collected by civil servants, colonial police officers, doctors, missionaries and travellers rather than by trained social researchers. These field notes and data were then 'analysed', interpreted and theorised by professional social scientists, also known as armchair anthropologists (Tedlock, 1991). This meant that cultural beliefs and practices were most often taken out of context and manipulated to fit existing theories rather than create new understandings. This era of

observation began to decline in the late nineteenth century when a new generation of social theorists began to challenge the notion of positivism with a new methodological framework, one which requires them entering the field themselves.

Positivism had dominated British and French social science research for the most part of the nineteenth century; however in Germany a different approach was being developed. Typically, Enlightenment philosophers had privileged rationality, objectivity and logic, but German philosopher Immanuel Kant critiqued these concepts and placed more emphasis on subjectivity and perception. Kant's work was developed further by the likes of Arthur Schopenhauer, Georg Hegel, Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Weber stressing the importance in hermeneutics, subjectivity and interpretation. In contrast to positivism, Dilthey developed the concept of *Verstehen*, which requires the researcher to attain an empathetic understanding of a subject's reality. This concept was furthered by Weber (1949) and became the essential characteristic of 'interpretivist sociology'. The key aspect of this approach was its focus on how subjects viewed or interpreted their social world, in contrast to positivism which emphasised detachment, objectivity and validity (Scott-Jones & Watt, 2010). Interpretivism allowed and encouraged the researcher to embrace subjectivity, build relationships with subjects in the field, and become immersed in the field environment.

Influenced by the work of Weber, Clifford Geertz (1973) is a classic example of the interpretivist approach as he was interested in the meaning behind the actions of people and their culture. Accordingly, he believed that:

'Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning'. (Geertz, 1973:1).

Culture is an interworked system of construable signs; a context of something which can be thickly described and for Geertz ethnography was thick description. Thick description is the

anthropological method of explaining in as much detail as possible the reason behind human action and it is based on the ethnographer's ability to go beyond what they can see (at the surface level) and interpret the meaning behind. He explains that human action can have many different meanings, for different reasons and described the ethnographer's job as 'sorting the winks from the twitches and the real winks from the mimicked ones' (Geertz, 1973:5). Geertz believed ethnography was more than just routine data collection of a culture; he believed it was the ethnographer's job to participate in every aspect of the field in order to understand and then interpret the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures which they are faced with (Geertz, 1973). Thick description of culture or phenomena provides us with a subjective, rich understanding of that culture and the more we understand of the culture, the more accessible they become to us.

One of the first anthropologists/ethnographers to establish a 'proper, systematic, modern ethnography' (Kuper, 1996:12) and 'immerse' themselves within the field was Bronislaw Malinowski. After his two years of fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands (1915-16 and 1917-1918) Malinowski stressed that the ethnographer's ultimate goal is 'to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world' (1922:25). In order to do this one must live in the field and immerse yourself in their social world, learn and use the language of your field subjects, isolate yourself from outside influences, participate in field activities where possible (therefore participant observation is a key element of ethnographic research) and take copious field notes recording data such as field settings, social rules, customs, folklore and descriptions. However, description and field notes were not enough for Malinowski, the data needed to be framed within a theoretical paradigm. Although coming from a functionalist approach, which stresses that all social phenomena have a function within society, and not an interpretivist approach which this thesis uses, Malinowski's work is important to consider as he provided an overarching framework as to how ethnography and participant observation should be conducted. He was also a major influence to the Chicago School of thought, who combined Malinowski's ethnographic approach with the philosophical and theoretical perspectives of the German tradition.

Sociology and anthropology have always been closely linked but one of the ways to distinguish them is that sociology typically focused on western, urban settings using quantitative methodologies whilst anthropology focused on non-western cultures, using ethnographic methodologies. The Chicago school pioneered the use of ethnography to study western urban settings, grounding them in the philosophical and theoretical approach of the German tradition. Founding members W.I Thomas and Robert E. Park stressed the importance of field work and the use of empirical data to build theoretical models. They explored social change as it happened in order to access and understand the social worlds in the interpretivist style (Scott-Jones & Watt, 2010). However, like the anthropological tradition exoticised the colonial non-European 'others', the Chicago school followed suit in its focus on urban 'other's typically concentrating on immigrants, the working class, vagrants and the poor side of western urban society. Like the anthropologists, these sociologists were relatively affluent white, upper middle class, male fieldworkers researching 'others' without any reference to issues of power, ethics, gender, race, class or their position within the research (Scott-Jones & Watt, 2010).

Throughout the 1960s there were several socio-political movements, such as the civil rights movement, gay rights, and second wave feminism movement, which would have lasting impacts on social sciences and subsequently social research. The emergent themes from these movements were the notions of representation and visibility and the lack thereof for women, homosexuals and different ethnicities. The movements, especially feminism brought to the surface issues around how, why and who can represent an individual or social group and led to a transformation in social theory, 'a shift in how we look at, think about and understand the social world around us' (Scott-Jones & Watt, 2010:23). This was known as the 'Post-modern Turn'.

Post-modernism was concerned with the construction of knowledge, issues of representation and power, and the importance of contextualisation. The works of theorists such as Levi Strauss (1984), Michel Foucault (1972), Stuart Hall (1992) and Homi Bhabha (1994) fed off into wider transformations, for example by the 1980s post modernism was extremely influential

to social anthropology and sociology and led to ethnographers reviewing how they conducted their research. This was known as the 'Reflexive Turn', with James Clifford and George Marcus leading the way with their influential title '*Writing Culture*' (1986). The reflexive turn requires the researcher/ethnographer to position themselves within the research, to be reflexive about their position within society, and to think about how their view of the world has been shaped by their gender, age, education, class, language, religion, and so on, as well as, how this may have an impact on their interpretation of the cultures, communities or societies they are researching. Furthermore, researchers need to consider how their position and view of the world may have an impact on how field subjects view or act towards them (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). The post-modernist turn meant that ethnographers could no longer remove themselves from their research, but must think through their prejudices, biases and how their very subjectivity affects their work at all stages whether in the field or writing up.

'Ethnographies today are contextualised, subjective interpretations of social worlds or cultures; they do not suggest that their works are timeless, grand narratives' (Scott-Jones & Watt, 2010).

Reflexivity: Positioning myself within the research

C. Wright Mills (1959) noted that using life history should be the basis of sociological enquiry and that 'you must learn to use your life experiences in your intellectual work continually to examine and interpret it' (196). Furthermore, he suggests that 'an educator must begin with what interests the individual most deeply, even if it seems altogether trivial and cheap' (Wright Mills, 1959:207). The notion that one must be reflexive of one's own biography, even if it seems trivial and cheap is something which will be explored throughout this chapter as life history and personal biography often affects how we choose our area of enquiry whilst simultaneously affecting the possibilities within the ethnography itself. My personal biography is deeply intertwined with the Iranian community studied but no matter how connected to the field of enquiry you are, or how prepared one feels on entering the field, 'adaptability is a necessary response to the uncertainty surrounding many aspects of the field. Therefore, a

successful ethnography is grounded in the ethnographer's ability to be reflexive of one's local culture before entry to the research field as well as being continually reflexive during and after (Roberts and Sanders, 2005). Importantly one should provide a reflexive stance towards one's reasoning for entering a field in the first place as well as the resources that will enable this to take place (Roberts and Sanders, 2005).

A significant portion of researchers on the Iranian Global Diaspora tend to be Iranian themselves, therefore they have a profound understanding of the culture, the language of Farsi and what it feels like to move, or be exiled from Iran and begin life in another country. They themselves have experienced dislocation, displacement, identity renegotiation and loss of belonging and therefore have an entirely reflexive experience. Halleh Ghorashi, a prominent researcher of the Iranian diaspora in the Netherlands and United States left Iran in 1988 as an exile and went to the Netherlands. At the age of seventeen she had participated in the Iranian Revolution (1979) as a leftist political activist and spent the following eight- ten years living in fear of being killed or arrested. This suppression is what prompted her to leave Iran. In her book *'Ways to Survive, Battles to Win: Iranian Women Exiles in the Netherlands and the United States'* she provides a reflexive account of her experiences in the Iran Revolution, her relocation to the Netherlands, as well as, her role as researcher and an Iranian political activist in exile and how this all played a part in her research. Similarly, Zoreh Sullivan's reflexive account of exile to America is entrenched in her book *'Exiled Memories: Stories of Iranian Diaspora'*. A book which stems from her experiences of exile and early awareness of being 'not-quite' and othered in India, Pakistan and America, as well as her difficulties with 'belonging' and 'home' (Sullivan, 2002).

My experience is somewhat different to these researchers as it is my father who is Iranian. I am a mixed race British Iranian and have never lived in Iran, nor do I speak Farsi. However, just like the Iranians being studied, I live within the 'in-betweens' of culture. In chapter five I will discuss how Iranian cultural identity was formed in the tensions between their idea of Iran as home and their desire to create a home in Newcastle. Similarly, my cultural identity was formed in the interstices between this re-imagined Iranian diasporic community and British

society. Therefore, the post-colonial and psychoanalytical concepts I use to analyse and explore the renegotiation of Iranian cultural identity can also be used to understand my own. Through my discussions of my childhood and early adulthood outlined throughout this chapter, we will see how psychoanalytical concepts such as the split self, ambivalence and the fantasy of wholeness apply to my identity renegotiation. I am what Sherif (2001) refers to as a partial insider, or what Taylor (2011) describes as an intimate insider. Partial intimate insiders, people who have background ties to the culture being studied, provide certain insight into the dynamics that can occur in the research process. Research cites a variety of interrelated advantages of insider research including: the value of shared experience; the value of cultural interpretation; the value of greater access; and the value of deeper understanding and clarity of thought for the researcher. As Clifford and Marcus (1986) state 'insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depth of understanding (1986:9), however, as other researchers such as Karim (1993) and Okely (1996) have shown, partial insiders are also constrained by boundaries imposed through the ethnographic/anthropological discipline as well as, by personal and gendered experiences in the field (Sherif, 2001). This is something I experienced and will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. As a partial insider boundaries are blurred, identities are ever shifting and ambiguous highlighting once again that ethnographic research is multi-layered and inter-woven, thus challenging the assumption of oppositional subjectivities rooted in western binary thinking (Sherif, 2001: 438). As Acker (2001) states 'none of us are always and forever either insiders or outsiders. Our multiple subjectivities allow us to be both....simultaneously, and to shift back and forth'. (109).

'Dichotomised rubrics such as 'black/white' or 'insider/outsider' are inadequate to capture the complex and multi-faceted experiences of some researchers such as ourselves, who find themselves neither total 'insiders' nor 'outsiders' in relation to the individuals they interview (Song & Parker, 1995:243).

My father came to the UK for education in 1978, choosing Gateshead, a town close to Newcastle upon Tyne because he was accepted into a college close by. He met my mother, a

local to the area in Hebburn College and they married in a Roman Catholic Church several years later. He was not a practising Muslim at the time but she was a practising Catholic. During those several years my father, like many Iranian men had completed a degree in Electrical Engineering at UK institution but ended up running his own Takeaway business in Gateshead town centre upon his return to the North East. Of his friends, only three managed to succeed into the trade and two of those were due to their wives' connections e.g. working in the council already. He argues that around 80% of his friends who did courses in Electrical or Mechanical Engineering ended up opening a Takeaway business, 10% opened Restaurants and the other 10% worked for other Iranians.

1986 was also the year I was born, and upon my birth my Grandmother on my mother's side announced to the whole family, 'She's white!' As a staunch Roman Catholic, whose mother had converted from Protestantism to Catholicism for marriage during a time when such things were extremely frowned upon, my grandmother was the main instiller of religion in our family. So much so, that my mother's consideration for marrying my father was on the basis that their future children would be brought up and christened Roman Catholic. My mother did not want us being brought up Muslim, so already before my birth there were strong indications as to what influences would play upon my identity and tensions surrounding my mixed raceness. It comes as no surprise then that I attended a Roman Catholic Nursery, Primary and Comprehensive School and as a young girl (until around 12 years old) attended church every week with my Grandmother. I was Christened, made my Holy Communion and was even an 'Alter Girl' for a time, assisting the priest throughout mass. As a child I always considered myself white as that is the colour of my skin, but I remember explaining to people that I was half Iranian, half English. This was usually prompted by being asked where my very long, 'clearly' not English surname (which was Soleimanpourchari at the time) came from. Every time I told people I was half and half, I got corrected by my mother, she would always say 'You're not half and half of anything, you're a whole person, you're Natalie'. It is only through my university education that I can see what my mother's concern was, she didn't want me to grow up feeling like a 'pathological half person' (Boyarin and Boyarin, 1993), she wanted me

to have a unified, unwavering, stable identity that was inherently British; a fantasy of 'wholeness' (Lacan, 2006). However, as I discussed in the theoretical conceptual framework chapter, identities are not stable; they are fluid, decentred and hybrid. I am an example of this hybridity and this is not only apparent through my life experiences, but also through my choice in studying the Iranian diaspora in a bid to understand more about my Iranian heritage. I even have my hybrid identity tattooed on my body as a way of expressing who I am and where I come from. I was born in the coastal town of South Shields where people are known colloquially as the 'Sandancers'. In a bid to combine my Iranian and Geordie heritage I decided to have the word 'Sandancer' tattooed on my body in Persian. When translated, the tattoo says 'someone who dances on the sand'.

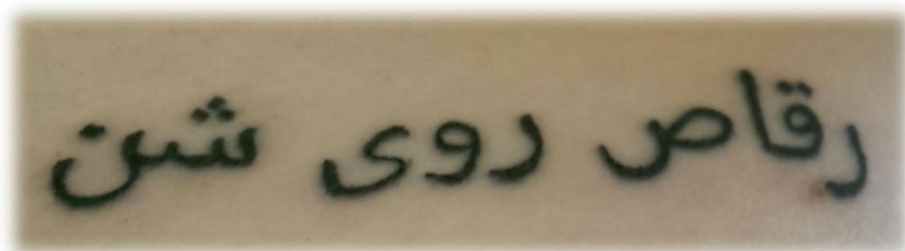


Figure 1: Tattoo which represents my hybrid identity

As stipulated at the beginning of this chapter, as a child (and to some extent even now) I was never fully engrained within Iranian culture. I was being brought up in England so my Father saw no need to bring me up as his little Farsi girl. It is for this reason that I am unable to converse in Farsi. As a small child he did teach me very basic Farsi like 'hello, goodbye', how to count to ten as well as parts of the face and body. He didn't teach me how to read or write Farsi. Interestingly what he did teach me are still some of the only Farsi words to remain with me, even after taking a 10-week beginner Farsi course at university in which I learnt how to read, write and converse. Further to this, my father also taught me how to behave in the presence of his friends or other Iranians, and how to speak to them politely. For example, I had to refer to his friends as *Amu* which means *Uncle* in Farsi. Manners between British and Iranian culture are not inherently different but I remember my Father instilling and enforcing manners in the presence of his Iranian friends, far more than I remember my Mother doing so amongst my English family and friends. For example, there was strictly no burping or

flatulence of any kind in the presence of Iranians. Regardless of it being an accident or if there was an apology immediately after, it resulted in serious repercussions should I forget in the presence of Iranian guests. This was especially prevalent during the service of food. Around English family or friends however, an apology was more than adequate. Whilst this may seem a trivial example, it is an example of the way in which I was brought up in the folds in-between cultures.

Whilst I may have grown up predominantly within British society, culture and institutions, I did spend significant time within the Iranian community. My father's Iranian friends, their English wives and mixed race children would come round to our house for dinner, or we would go to theirs. Throughout the summer we would go to Iranian barbeques down the coast, or picnics in the park. There were also birthday parties and my favourite event of the year, Iranian New Year (Nowruz) where I got to meet up with all my Iranian friends who I only got to see once a year. Occasionally my family would go on holiday with one of my father's friends and their family. The Iranian community has therefore played a major role in my identity construction whether I was aware of this at the time or not. Almost all of the meals I ate at home were Iranian dishes, the only time I really ate English food was at School or at my Grandmothers. Yet still the Iranian side of my life has always remained on the periphery, or at least it felt that way. It was never fully ingrained into my life, it was like a coat I put on sometimes. It also never felt like something which belonged to me, it was always my father's culture. It was this ambivalence around authenticity and belonging which revealed my split self; that I am like this Iranian community, but not quite. I am both inside it, and outside it simultaneously.

My older childhood memories of this community are filled with ambivalence as whilst they are filled with fun memories at the macro level such as the Iranian Nowruz parties where I danced, frolicked and played games with the other Iranian and mixed race Iranian children; they are also tinged with frustration and ignorance, especially throughout my teenage years. This frustration came from my inability to speak Farsi and the community's natural preference to converse in Farsi at almost all gatherings. As a young child I learned to tune this out, so that

the Farsi was just a distant buzz in my head, other children similar to me provided an easy distraction. However, as I got older, particularly in my teenage years, my father's friendship group had changed whereby everyone, including the other Iranian children could speak Farsi. I became annoyed that I could not be included in conversation nor fully understand what was going on around me. My siblings and I were often just left to sit and amuse ourselves in silence whilst everyone around us talked, laughed and enjoyed themselves. At the time I took this personally and it resulted in me avoiding such gatherings for an extended period of time, what was the point in taking part in something but not being included? I felt excluded and ignored. I wanted to be like them (culturally e.g. speak Farsi) but to also be accepted and included for who I am. I'd like to point out that whilst this was how I felt, the community were never explicitly rude to me or exclusivist; on the contrary I was always invited to their homes, BBQ's, birthday parties and so on, but this was due to my dad's affiliation to the community and this put me in the ambivalent position of being included, inside and accepted in the one sense, whilst at the same time being the complete opposite, sitting on the outside feeling excluded and unable to participate at the micro level. There was a barrier preventing me from being able to fully participate in this community and as a child I believed that barrier to be language. However, as an adult I believe it to be more than just language, it is also the meaning behind cultural processes I have not necessarily experienced due to my mixed race upbringing, of what Bourdieu (1977) defines as *habitus*.

Habitus

This is a theory which recognises that social agents are not passive beings that are pushed and pulled by external forces, but creative beings who actively construct social reality through 'categories of perception, appreciation and action' (Wacquant, 2011:85).

'As the product of history, Habitus produces individual and collective practices, and thus history, in accordance with the schemata engendered by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemata of thought and action, tend, more surely than

all formal rules and all explicit norms, to guarantee the conformity of practices and their continuity over time' (Bourdieu, 1990:91).

Habitus is therefore, a set of acquired dispositions, we are not born fixed with a certain skill set or particular set of cultural rules ingrained into us, these are learnt from the environment we grow up in, the social institutions which dominate our life, our family, religion, school and so on, therefore Habitus varies by social location and trajectory: individuals with different life experiences will have acquired various ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Habitus operates beneath the level of consciousness and discourse, as Mauss defines it, 'Habitus is those aspects of culture which are anchored in the body, or daily practices of the individuals, groups, societies and nations. It includes the totality of acquired habits, bodily skills, styles, tastes, and other non-discursive knowledge that are 'natural, or go without saying' for a specific group (Bourdieu, 1990).

One of the first times I became inherently aware of my lack of Iranian habitus was at the beginning of my fieldwork whilst visiting an institution frequented by some members of the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne. Once a month these members would travel to London to attend a Sufi spiritual lesson at the *Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi (MTO)* - School of Islamic Sufism and on one occasion I decided to join them as part of my field observations. On the journey down there, my father (gatekeeper) meticulously went through everything I would need to do on arrival at the school. Unfortunately, I was not able to follow him as I had to enter through the female entrance and there were no females I knew, who could speak English in attendance from Newcastle. He explained that when I entered the building I needed to quickly remove my shoes and coat and give these to the ladies at the door for which I would receive a ticket number. I then had to sign in, giving my name, address and telephone number. The sign in form was written in Farsi, therefore my father even went to the extremes of telling me in which order to write the relevant information e.g. right hand box was for my name, the middle box for my address, and the left hand box for my telephone number. This would not have been obvious if he had forgotten to tell me as I was the only person to write in English in the boxes,

everyone else wrote in Farsi. After signing in, I needed to go to the changing room and put my white clothes on and after this I could proceed to the main room and wait to be seated by one of the students.

Unfortunately, even with all of the information my father provided me, I was still not able to blend in as 'insider'. Upon entering the front gate I was immediately singled out as a stranger, positioned as the 'other' when the male student on the gate asked if I was 'Natalie Soleiman'. This shocked me as over 200 people attend this school. When I asked how he knew my name, he replied by saying that 'he didn't recognise the name on the list, and when he didn't recognise my face he knew I must be Natalie Soleiman'. My plan to blend in and embody the role of an Iranian woman attending the school was already blown. Regardless, I tried to compose myself and enter the school; all of the information my father had provided me was extremely helpful and I sailed through to the changing room thinking I had done well and just had to get changed and be seated in the main room. The class usually lasts for two hours so at this point I decided it would be a good idea to visit the toilet, so I joined the queue of ladies at the other end of the changing room. Whilst I was waiting in the queue I noticed that toilets were becoming available but the women at the front were not going straight in, instead they would wait for a woman to leave the bathroom before entering. I couldn't understand what this meant, so when I got to the front of the queue and a toilet became available I went straight in. I also noticed that the women in there were wearing flip flops but I just thought these were their own flip flops, whereas I only had socks on. I later learned that these were not their own flip flops but ones provided by the school for use in the bathroom and I had made quite a catastrophic error in toilet etiquette within Iranian culture. Much to the horror of the women who noticed, after using the bathroom I then proceeded to the main, sacred hall wearing those same socks.

Needless to say I was the 'talk of the town' and since I couldn't speak nor comprehend Farsi fluently I was completely none the wiser. The news actually reached me two weeks later and went through a series of people before it actually got to me, much to my embarrassment. When it got back to my father he was furious that these women had talked about me, rather

than help me or explain. He then went on to tell me that in Iran, regardless of whether there is tiled, carpeted, wooden or lino flooring in the bathroom, most people have slippers or flip flops by the door for you to wear when you are in the bathroom. When I asked him why this was, whether it was for hygiene reasons because traditionally the toilets in Iran are on the floor (rather than raised like the UK) or because toilets were previously outside, he said he didn't know and that's just the way it is. To me, this is a classic example of habitus. When explaining all of the things I needed to do upon entering the school, it never occurred to my father that he'd need to explain toilet etiquette, as it is a mundane everyday activity that we do not need to think about. Furthermore, when asked why this etiquette exists, there is no answer. It is preserved in memory and history ensuring continuity over time; it becomes embedded into society's structure even when the original purpose of that behaviour can no longer be recalled and socialised into the individuals of that culture (Bourdieu, 1990; Wacquant, 2011). This form of toilet etiquette was never apparent in my home growing up but upon reflection it is something I have seen in other Iranian homes; it was just never something I paid much attention to.

Throughout my life I have been a distant observer of this community not quite understanding the conversations or more importantly the Iranian people, I just took for granted that they were the way they were because they're Iranian. In order to gain an understanding of the ways in which Iranians renegotiate their identity not only did I need to access their everyday lives, culture, traditions and rituals, but I also needed to acquire a sense of their habitus. Due to my mixed race upbringing, in-between cultures, I have acquired elements of Iranian habitus, I know how to act and respond in Iranian situations I have previously encountered but as can be seen in the story above, I am not aware of how to behave and act in all contexts. According to Coffey (1999), in order to acquire another's 'habitus' we must train our bodies to fit into the field (1999:65) and this is usually done through the process of embodiment or, if we are coming from a post-colonial perspective, through a process of mimicry.

Embodiment

'Social research is based on the close up, on the ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do' (Wacquant, 2005:5).

Coffey (1999) states that 'field work is necessarily an embodied activity' (59). The body is negotiated in everyday life, an agent of cultural reproduction and as a site of cultural representation. Those who engage in fieldwork learn embodied skills in order to develop and negotiate field roles and relationships. In doing so, they learn how to perform and regulate their body according to perceived or understood norms and expectations (Coffey, 1999).

Louis Wacquant (2004) demonstrates intersubjective embodiment to an exceptional degree in his book '*Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*'. This was a three year ethnographic study on his transitions through the schooling of boxing. 'As we build up our embodied knowledge by training our bodies to do as our participants do, we attempt to gain another's habitus' (Bourdieu, 1990). Through his dedication to the embodied experience of the pugilistic sport he was able to translate the demanding experience of 'slugging it out in the gym' to an audience unfamiliar with the boxing gym (Wacquant, 2004). Through his embodiment we are able to get an intense level of depth and understanding of a boxer's life; a behind the scenes view of training, competing, tournaments as well as, their everyday lives, feelings, sense of community and identity construction.

'The friendship and trust accorded to me by the regulars of Woodlawn were such that I was able to not only blend in among them in the gym but also to accompany them in their everyday peregrinations outside of it' (Wacquant, 2004:5).

The fact that I am of mixed race descent is central to the ways in which I was experienced in the field. Many Iranians told me that they only participated in this study because they knew I

came from an Iranian background and had an understanding of Iranian culture. In an attempt to gain a more rounded Iranian habitus I tried to involve myself more in the Iranian community by attending organised events, participating in cultural rituals, spending time visiting their religious establishment, spending time visiting their homes and discussing their life stories as well as learning how to mimic, behave and act in an Iranian manner. As discussed above, having grown up around this Iranian community I already have subjective knowledge of aspects of Iranian culture and this was extremely beneficial when visiting Iranians in their home. For example, hosting and hospitality is something which Iranians pride themselves on and since I was a little girl I have watched Iranians go out of their way to ensure their guests are comfortable and well fed. They are encouraging to the point of force and this is known as the act of *ta'arof*. Described as 'the great national trait of exaggerated politesse, modesty, and self-deprecation that Iranians seem to be born with' (Majd 2008: 65), *ta'arof* is a widespread ritual of verbal and non-verbal communication in which Iranian social actors perform mutual deference (Maghbouleh, 2012). In practice *ta'arof* is an Iranian social code of courtesy and hospitality which has roots in Zoroastrian and Shia concepts of civil society (Vivier-Muresan 2006). As a ritualized system of formal politeness materialized through verbal and non-verbal acts of mutual deference:

'Ta'arof involves both parties insisting they are not worthy of the other and is in constant play in Iranian society - people refuse to walk through a door first, and hosts must offer pastries even if guests don't want them, and guests must say they don't want them even if they do. (Bahrapour 2007, p. 1).

Ta'arof is therefore a complex ritualised behaviour which relies on all parties engaged having an understanding of its norms and values. It is only through visiting Iran and spending time within the homes of Iranians that I have come to understand the act of ta'arof in an ideological sense. However, whilst I have an understanding of the concept I still do not have a full working knowledge of all its norms. Whilst visiting family in Iran I was caught out by the act of ta'arof on multiple occasions. For example if I tried to compliment my auntie's jewellery (costume) or

clothing she would try and give it to me, insisting that I take it from them as they could get another and they wanted me to have it as a gift. This was very confusing to me and I made a mental note to refrain from passing compliments to family members in the future in order to prevent such a situation occurring again. Luckily my father was there and intervened telling my aunty that I didn't understand ta'arof and that I was just passing a compliment.

When visiting members of the community at their home in Newcastle upon Tyne, the act of ta'arof is generally perceived in hospitality by offering people plenty of drinks, fruit, and biscuits no matter how many times they decline. To an outsider this can come across as pressurising, especially as within the UK there is a general understanding that when offered food or drink at someone's home it is impolite to refuse. However in Iranian culture, there is an expectation to carry on offering and declining a few times before the guest finally relents and accepts. This is something I learnt on the few occasions I interviewed people at my father's home. In order to fully participate I told my father I would like to be in charge of the hosting and hospitality throughout the respondent's (guest) stay. I placed nuts, fruit and an array of Iranian biscuits on the coffee table and when the guest arrived I proceeded to embody the role of Iranian hostess:

N: Can a get you anythin to drink? Tea, coffee, juice..water....?

D: No am fine tank you

N: you sure?

D: yea am fine

N: Ok, well if you want anythin let is know and I'll get it for ya

At this point my father intervened, laughing he said:

F: Go put the kettle on

N: but the said they didn't wanna a drink...

F: I know, just go put the kettle on.. this is ta'arof, they'll always say no, you just go put the kettle on and they'll have one.

N: oh... ok (puts kettle on)

N: how d'yi take ya hot drink?

D: I'll have a coffee wi milk please.

Later in the middle of the interview when I offered the guest more to drink, we had the same scenario all over again so I made them another coffee anyway, which they drank. This whole situation was extremely conflicting and confusing for me because usually if I've offered this person a drink and they've declined, I don't want to be pushy and make them uncomfortable, so I just tell them to ask for a drink whenever they want. I am of the impression that if they wanted a drink, they would accept. However, I was attempting to embody the role of an Iranian hostess and needed to embrace and learn the art of ta'arof.

What became immediately apparent throughout my research is that whilst I wished to embody or mimic the role of an Iranian woman to gain more access and acceptance within the Iranian community, I actually found this identity renegotiation extremely difficult because it conflicted with my sense of self. I wanted to be like them, but I also wanted to be accepted for who I already was. This is similar to DuBois' notion of double consciousness outlined in chapter three and is something I will go on to discuss in this next section on Methodological Implications. Furthermore, whilst my insider/outsider status presented me with an abundance of rich data or *thick description*, it also presented a series of implications and considerations which I will present in the next section on partial insider and intimate insider research.

Methodological implications:

This section will evaluate some of the conflicts, difficulties and ambiguous feelings I encountered throughout the research process as a partial or intimate insider. From the literature it appears there is very little research discussing how one goes about negotiating previously established friends and intimate relationships within insider research. Furthermore, there is even less research discussing family relationships and their impact upon research, as well as the impact the research may have on the relationship. Whilst there are many

advantages to being an insider of the community you study there are obviously, as with any study, quagmires which need addressing.

Intimate Insider Research

Taylor (2011) describes research using already established friendships as 'intimate insider' research and 'intimate friendships'. She argues that intimate inside research is different from inside research because

'the researcher is working in their own backyard; that is a contemporary cultural space with which the researcher has regular ongoing contact; where the researchers personal relationships are deeply imbedded in the field; where one's quotidian interactions and performances of identity are made visible; and thus become engaged within the process of self-interpretation to some degree; and where the researcher is privy to undocumented historical knowledge of the people and cultural phenomena being studied' (Taylor, 2011:9).

My research is very similar to this as it is intimate in the fact that I was essentially working in my own back garden, my fieldwork mainly consisted of family members, family friends and acquaintances. It was a cultural space in which I had been brought up alongside; with people I had known since I was a small child; where I was already privy to undocumented knowledge of people and the culture/phenomena being studied. It was therefore unsurprising that we encountered a lot of the same internal conflicts, such as chartering the personal and professional divide; positionality and roles; power relations; ethics around using intimate knowledge; overfamiliarity with the field; as well as disclosure and representation of which I will discuss below.

The only difference between my research and Taylor's is that I wasn't studying friends; I was studying family friends or friends of my fathers. There is even less research which attempts to address the experiences of studying family and the impacts of this on the research. Carolyn Ellis is a widely known and respected auto-ethnographer who has detailed her own personal experiences of acting as a carer to her dying partner, her experiences of coping with the death

of her brother, as well as how she felt caring for her elderly mother after an operation. All of this is expressed in intimate detail so that the reader feels as though they are walking through every moment alongside Ellis. In her article '*Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in research with Intimate Others*' she provides a reflexive account of her experiences of research, the ethical quandaries she faced, the mistakes she made and the problems she overcome when researching intimate others and friends. She mainly tackled the issue of how her auto ethnography incorporates intimate others, how in talking about her own experiences she simultaneously discusses intimate others in the process and the ethics surrounding this. Her worry was that she would inadvertently hurt the feelings of those she writes about and she attempted to overcome this ethically by reading her work to those who were included in her auto-ethnographic accounts. However, she admits that she would miss parts out or change words she felt may hurt their feelings, for example when reading an account to her mother about her role as carer she neglected to mention the fact she had discussed details of her mother's bowel movements. She argues that these are decisions that auto ethnographers, and ethnographers need to make themselves based on the context, relationships and personal experiences. There is no set way, or help guide to researching intimate others, it is a matter of morals. 'Relational ethics requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others and initiate and maintain conversations' (Ellis, 2007:4). Furthermore, it recognises and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researcher and communities in which they live and work (Ellis, 2007:4). It is only through the reflexive accounts of other researchers and their relational ethics decisions that we can provide guidance to similar quandaries in the future. Therefore this next section will discuss my experiences of using family and friends in intimate insider research and how I negotiated the many faces of insider/outsider status.

When the self is so inextricably tied to ones informants and field of enquiry, the process of intimate insider research then involves a degree of, or may even be called a type of autoethnography (Taylor, 2011: 9; see also: Coffey, 2002; Ellis, 2007) .

When your Dad is your Gatekeeper: Negotiating a Father-Daughter Relationship

One of the first things I would like to discuss is the experience of having my dad as my gatekeeper. From a literature search there is very little I could find on this subject with only Jean Briggs '*Kapluna Daughter*' baring any similarities to my own research. This was a study where Briggs was adopted (for the purpose of the research) by a family of Eskimos in order to study the Utkuhiksalingmiut Eskimo community on the northern rim of the American continent. In her chapter '*Kapluna Daughter*' she discusses her role as daughter, as well as the difficulties in negotiating and renegotiating her relationship with her adopted mother and father. What I found extremely interesting about her research was with the conflicts she faced between what it meant to be a daughter, father and mother in her country, and what was expected of her as a daughter by her adoptive parents as this is very similar to an experience I had with my father whilst visiting our family in Iran.

As I mention later in this chapter, in the section 'Nowruz 2012 in Iran', I would often help my aunts and female cousins prepare, set and clear the table for meals. This is something I would do regardless of whose house I was at whether at a friend's, family's or a guest at a participant's home, in England or Iran. However, my father felt the need to order me to do such things at every opportunity, usually in front of the male family members who could speak English. This made me feel annoyed and embarrassed because it gave the impression that I was lazy or that I had no intention of helping when I actually had every intention. He was also very bossy, changed plans last minute without consulting me and put me in a few of awkward positions with family members. Furthermore, he began to get easily annoyed when I asked him to translate the conversations they were having in Farsi. This then resulted in a lecture from some family members saying I should learn Farsi, like it was only my fault that I never learnt it in the first place. At the time I was enraged by the way he was talking to me, as well as how he was treating me in such a commanding manner. At home in Newcastle upon Tyne he would never speak to me in such a way in front of his friends, nor would he get away with it. My father and I have a respectful relationship built on the fact we can usually be very straight forward with each other, he doesn't expect me to agree with everything he says, nor does he

exercise control over how I conduct my life. However, when we were in Iran, with our family, in a completely different environment he did expect me to do this and I had difficulties renegotiating my identity within this context. Upon reflection what my father was doing was positioning me in the role of a daughter in Iran, a role I had intended to play in the research however, it conflicted with our usual father-daughter relationship, or rather my experience of our father daughter relationship and it was the renegotiation of this role which I had problems with. It also conflicted with my sense of self, my notion of being a woman and my highly valued independence. Briggs (1970) discusses how she had these same problems and that although she should have welcomed this as 'acceptance' as their daughter she could not be happy. She found it extremely difficult to have decisions made for her by her adoptive father, but she was most at odds with the 'subordination, unquestioning obedience to paternal authority' stating how 'their assumptions about the nature of parentally and daughterly virtue were at variance' to hers (Briggs, 1970).

Fearful that this would have a lasting impact on our father-daughter relationship I ended up casually confronting my dad in a passing comment that if he continued to talk to me in such a manner and embarrass me in front of family members we would end up falling out. I think he silently acknowledged what I said. It is only upon reflection many months afterwards that I realised that I was not the only one dealing with a renegotiation of identity and roles, my dad was too. Upon entering Tehran I noticed subtle changes within my dad's demeanour, especially in the airport when dealing with officials he was particularly humble, not making eye contact. I can only describe his behaviour as fearful and submissive. Furthermore, he lives away from his family for years at a time, now upon returning to Iran he was expected to play the role of son, brother, uncle and guest. The fact that he no longer lives in Iran also made him feel like a tourist, so that was another role to play, but most importantly just like I was dealing with a loss of independence, my dad was too. Like me, he was constrained by his inability to get around Tehran on his own because the Tehran he had grown up in no longer existed. Whilst he remembered the streets and shops near his mother's home in South Tehran, he was not familiar with the North of Tehran where my aunts lived. This lack of independence meant

that he was constrained by his family in the sense that he relied on their desire to go out as well as their transportation.

Gatekeeper Interference

As with other research which relies on the use of gatekeepers I experienced minor episodes of interference (Taylor, 2011; Briggs, 1970) and this was because I relied heavily on my dad for access to the community, his friends and his other Iranian contacts. There came a point when I realised that at times, he was pushing me towards interviewing certain types of Iranians, ones he deemed to be 'good Iranians' and trying to keep me away from the 'other' Iranians. Who these allusive others are, I don't know as I never met them but I discuss them in some detail within chapter five due to the way they are talked about in the Iranian community I was connected to. At first I asked him to connect me to people who knew me as a child, people I had grown up around. I thought this would be more comfortable for myself and for them as there would already be a sense of rapport. However, sometimes when I suggested someone I knew from my childhood, my dad would say 'you don't want to interview them, they'll just talk crap'. At first I took his expert opinion but after this occurred a few times I felt as though he was only pushing me towards successful Iranians, e.g. those with their own business or those who worked hard 'in his eyes'. I tried to access other parts of the Iranian community by attending a Nowruz party in Newcastle upon Tyne, against my father's wishes. As he refused to attend I did not feel as if I was able to access people on my own – I discuss this later in the section 'Nowruz 2013 Newcastle upon Tyne'. However, he was all too forthcoming in encouraging me to attend his religious establishment to study this fragment of the Iranian community.

Gatekeeper Distance

This minor interference caused some tension between us, but nothing drastic, although there did come a point in the research process when I realised my dad was becoming a bit uncomfortable in his role as gatekeeper. I'm not sure whether he felt under pressure from me or whether he began to feel uncomfortable due to his position in the community but he started to distance himself from me and the research, telling me to contact people myself or that he was too busy and therefore couldn't ask people on my behalf. This was particularly prevalent

when asking him to put me in contact with women. This could have been his way of encouraging me to take more responsibility for my research, as you will see in my section on *Positioning and Roles* below, I rarely felt in a powerful position within the research due to the different roles I played, particularly that of 'daughter'. My access to the community was based on my position as my father's daughter, rather than as an ethnographer or researcher. Therefore, I found it very hard to step out of this role as daughter because I feared I would not have the same access. Alternatively, maybe this was an aspect of Iranian culture I was unfamiliar with and that it was maybe rude for him to ask another man's wife to participate in my research? I attempted to get my father's wife to put me in touch with some women but the women she associated with either didn't speak English fluently, weren't confident in their English speaking capabilities or didn't want to take part. Luckily this problem of acquiring women to participate in my research was alleviated when a new member of the Newcastle MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism heard about my research through another lady I had interviewed and asked my dad to put her name forward. She was studying a social science subject at university and was therefore aware of research, interviews and observations, and was willing to be involved in an interview. I had never met this lady prior to my research, but throughout her interview we really connected and over very short period we have become rather close friends. She not only introduced me to a range of women interested in participating in biographical interviews, but she has provided me with a valuable insight into the experiences of Iranian women both in Iran and the UK, and like my father, has provided invaluable information which aided my understanding of Iranian culture and the meaning behind rituals, tradition and everyday life.

Power, Positioning and Roles

As stated above I gained entry to this community of Iranians on the basis of being my father's daughter and it was this role that I continued to use throughout the entirety of my research. I was comfortable to use this role as this is how the majority of the community knew me, it made rapport easier and as told by a few respondents, it was the main reason why I was granted access to their everyday lives and biographical interviews. One respondent specifically told me that he was only participating because he knew me as a little girl and he knew my father and

that if it had been an outsider studying Iranian experiences he would not have participated. This brought issues of power to my attention. In her work on intimate research Browne (2003) discusses issues around a sense of duty to the researcher. This led me to question whether people were participating in my research as they felt a sense of duty to my father, who has a prominent position within the community. Browne (2003) states that this could be perceived as peer pressure. It may be that people were reluctant to participate in the research but they were 'convinced' by other participants or gatekeepers. I did not witness overt forms of this, participant relations outside the research space may have influenced who was involved in the study but in line with ethical codes of research, I made sure that participants were always aware that they were free to leave the interview at any time and remove their data from the research.

Insider or Outsider?

As ethnographers we want to gain access to people's natural everyday experiences, and in order to do this I felt the most natural way for me to be part of the research was as my father's daughter, rather than specifically 'researcher' or 'ethnographer'. I felt this tipped the balance of power to the hands of the respondents and in doing so I hoped this made them feel more comfortable. Whilst I may have begun in the position of daughter, throughout my research I felt like I was constantly moving between identities or roles, such as: insider, outsider, British, female, confidant, counsellor, friend, researcher, ethnographer, guest, daughter, single woman, and student to name but a few. Some of which gave way to positive learning experiences and feelings of inclusion, whilst other positionings led to feelings of being outside and unhomely (Freud, 1919). For example, the story I mentioned earlier about toilet etiquette in the Sufism establishment in London. There were many times, particularly at Iranian events (discussed later in this chapter) like the Nowruz party, or events organised by the MTO where I felt like an insider and outsider, and was positioned as an outsider. I may have been brought up within the folds of the Iranian community and invited by the members of the Newcastle MTO but generally I was still on the outside of these events looking in. I often felt as Bhabha (1994) would say, almost the same, but not quite. This was further emphasised in interviews when Iranians were discussing differences between British and Iranian culture. When referring to

Iranian culture they would say 'my' culture and when discussing British culture they would say 'your' culture.

Guest

When visiting respondents at their homes to conduct their interview or observe them in their everyday life I was always positioned as a guest and they were therefore the host(ess). As the hostess they are placed in the position of power and at times this led to me staying in someone's home for much longer than anticipated. For example, due to the nature of biographical interviews many would go off on tangents which is completely natural when telling a story, but as I was in their home, under their hospitality I felt I had little control in moving them along or coming to an end. However, information I gathered from intimate informants was far greater in volume, depth and richness than other informants in my research.

Furthermore, some would insist on cooking for me, or providing refreshments and whilst this allowed me to observe the lived experience of Iranian ritual formalities of hosting and hospitality which is an extremely important characteristic of Iranian identity with lots of subtleties and nuances, I was also conscious of taking too much of their time or overstaying my welcome. This was especially confusing due to my inexperience of navigating the boundaries of the Iranian cultural ritual of *Ta'arof* mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Counsellor

At other times respondents positioned me in a counselling role and used their interviews to discuss or relay difficulties they had in their lives or vent their frustrations and anger at their situation. There was also a confessional element, for example when discussing relationships with loved ones and the guilt they feel for not being with them. This led to tears and sadness but because of the nature of biographical interviews and my previous employment in a support worker role I naturally fell into that caring, counselling role where I would try to empower them. As they told me their story I tried to relay the positive aspects of their life, how far they had come and how much they had achieved in order to boost their morale. I was particularly concerned about the impacts that my research may have upon the respondents' identity so I didn't want to leave the interview with them feeling negative or upset.

Friend and confidant

As mentioned earlier I became quite good friends with one particular respondent. Unlike most of my other interviews, I had never met this respondent before, and although she knew my father through their shared practice of Sufism, she knew nothing about me other than my research. She had contacted my father about taking part because she was studying a social sciences degree at university and was interested in research. Throughout the two hour interview we developed a great rapport and were both surprised by the ease of the interview. At the end she compared the interview to the conversations she would have with her friends, expressing how she felt we'd known each other for years, when in fact it was merely hours.

After this initial meeting we contacted each other regularly through social media and text messages with her voluntarily taking a more prominent role as gatekeeper, helping me to access Iranian woman within the community. When I was visiting home in Newcastle I would always try to visit her like I would my family and my friends. A quick visit for a 'cuppa' would generally result in me being there for a few hours with her insisting I stay for dinner and gossiping for hours about anything and everything. For me, what cements our friendship is the trust that we accord each other, she would discuss things with me that only her closest friends would know and I would do the same. Even now when my visits home are more sporadic we still keep in touch through social media and try to catch up every other month. This is very similar to the relationships I hold with my friends from home and those who live around the country. I would describe her as my first adult Iranian friend and she has played a large role in helping me feel included within the Iranian community.

Many researchers argue that friendships which arise through research are problematic, confusing and unstable due to role confusion, conflicts, feelings of betrayal, power differences and conflicts surrounding withdrawal from the field (Taylor, 2011). Crick (1992) was ambivalent about the potential for establishing field based relationships because of the disparities of power, culture and class that commonly separates researchers and informants stating that 'if I call Ali and "friend" or "informant", both labels would say too much and also leave something out' (1992:177). However, Powdermaker (1966) notes that in the majority of his fieldwork there were always one of two people with whom he developed 'an extremely

close friendship....who provided the deepest communication' and these people helped him make sense of the field more than any other. These are all examples of friendships developing throughout the research and as noted earlier, the benefits of forging close relationships between outsider participant observers and respondents have been explored in qualitative and ethnographic work, yet the possible influences of already existing friendships between the insider participant observer and informants is underdeveloped (Taylor,2011; Labaree 2002). Hendry (1992) is one of the only researchers who has discussed the deterioration of her friendship after her friend becomes a research informant and gatekeeper.

Whilst negotiating one's position within the research, within the community and with the intimate insider respondents is a fundamental role as an ethnographer, one must also consider the effects that one's intimate insiderness may have on the research, which brings me to the issues of disclosure, representation, ethics and overfamiliarity.

Disclosure and Representation

One of the main issues highlighted within insider research, as well as, intimate insider research is issues with disclosure and the ethics surrounding this. When do meetings move from research to friendship? Where does one draw the line with regards to what we disclose as research?

'Native researchers must be especially sensitive to the dangers of disclosing cultural secrets of airing what community members may consider "dirty laundry"' (Jacobs-Huey, 2002: 797).

According to Taylor (2011), in order to create a positive and safe research environment it is important for the researcher to provide full disclosure of their aims and intent. However, even when full disclosure exists, participants especially if they are friends, family or family friends, will sometimes forget that they are research participants and treat you as a friend rather than a researcher. Therefore, it becomes necessary for you as researcher to also consider what is 'on' or 'off' record. There were times during the research when this situation arose, particularly during discussions with my gatekeepers. At first I would seek validation for my interpretations because as Taylor (2011) states, this helps protect the trust between friend/family researcher

and friend/family informant. Other times, the informant would say 'don't talk about this'. However, as time went on I was instinctively able to distinguish such information which was off record because I understood the difference between what they were telling me as researcher and what they were disclosing to me as a friend. It therefore felt unethical for me to transcribe, or make notes on this statement.

With regards to representation, due to my closeness to the research area I often feared how the community would react to my observations and analysis. I was therefore conscious of how I present and portray this Iranian community, and this was especially prevalent when writing about the Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahrmaqsoudi. As I am not a member of this school of Sufism, nor fully understand its teachings, I was conscious of presenting it from the eyes of a westerner. The aim was to present the importance of this school to the members of the Iranian community and the ways in which it aids them in negotiating a sense of home and belonging in the UK. Therefore, I have presented the school from the perspective of the members in the community. As Taylor (2011) states 'omission is political; it is also tricky, yet it is often necessary' (2011:14) and knowing when not to overstep the line between being a friend and being a researcher is an important skill I have had to develop quickly as an intimate insider.

Overfamiliarity

Another issue which intimate insider researchers need to consider is the that of being too close to the field. I have a personal investment in this field, not only because I am researching it but because it is also a way of learning my heritage. Therefore, I have come to know this field in the deepest and most familiar ways. These intensely familiar ways of knowing raise interpretative challenges, provoking the researcher to question their familiarity and the potential for insider blindness to the mundane, every day and unobtrusive (Taylor, 2011; Labaree, 2002, DeLyser, 2001). In the beginning I often felt like I had no idea what I should be looking for, or possibly overlooked things because they were so familiar. When it came to looking at the banalities of everyday life in order to understand how these Iranians create a sense of home and belonging, I was convinced that I was writing banalities about the banalities of everyday life! Taylor (2011) experienced a similar problem where she felt that

over time her observations were rendered banal. The way in which I combatted this was by placing distance between myself and the field (Burke, 1989; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). Ohnuki-Tierney (1984) argues that the native must find a way to create sufficient distance between themselves and their cultures, intellectually, emotionally and physically. For some ethnographers this is not possible, but because I was living and studying in Stoke-on-Trent whereas my field back home in Newcastle, I was able to distance myself physically. This distance gave me clarity because I had the space to unpack the observations.

There was also an element of unlearning the familiar (Bennett, 2003). In the beginning of this chapter I mentioned that because I had sat on the periphery of this community I had taken for granted that Iranians are the way they are, because they're Iranian. Without really thinking about what that means. Whilst I was attempting to acquire an aspects of Iranian habitus through embodiment, there were also elements of unlearning whereby I had to remove those 'taken for granted attitudes and values (Bennett, 2003). This was extremely difficult and confusing which is why I often felt lost in the field. There were many processes of negotiation going on and it is only through being reflexive about my experience that I was able to fully comprehend the complexity of being an intimate insider ethnographer. As there appears to be very little literature on managing friendships and relationships which already exist prior to the research or fieldwork, I hope that my experiences can provide some insight into this gap in qualitative and ethnographic research.

Language

The final methodological implication I would like to discuss is my inability to comprehend or speak Farsi and how this may have affected my research. Although my research stipulated that I would only be interviewing Iranians who could converse in English, it can be argued that it has been disadvantaged because my participants were not free to converse in their native language. Furthermore, I was also left without access to those within the community who are unable to speak English.

The majority of research on Iranian diaspora has been conducted by fellow Iranians who have experienced life in a diaspora, processes of migration, exile, and identity renegotiation.

Therefore, it could be argued that they would have a deeper understanding of Iranian experiences. There were times when my interviewees struggled to express themselves properly as they attempted to find the correct word or phrase in English. They also mentioned that they could not always accurately express their feelings because what they were trying to say could not be translated into English easily. Unfortunately, there was nothing I could do about this and urged interviewees to express themselves the best way they could. In a bid to help me understand, sometimes the interviewees would go out of their way to ring a friend or partner in order to find the correct translation. Ultimately, it could be argued that important information or understandings could have been missed. This was especially true within my observations of the community as there were often times when entire conversations took place in Farsi and I was unable to follow. Usually a gatekeeper was present to feed back the situation, however there were times when a gatekeeper was not present and I had no way of fully understanding what was going on.

At the onset of my fieldwork I considered using an interpreter so that the interviews may be conducted in Persian should the participant wish. However, due to the sensitive nature of the research, and the fact that interviews focussed on the biography of the participant's life, I felt that participants may be less inclined to discuss their personal experiences in the presence of two people, compared to just one. Furthermore, I would have spent the majority of the interview unaware of what was being said, or constantly interrupting the flow of the interview whilst the interpreter translated. The purpose of biographical interviews or narrative interviews is for them to flow like a conversation, rather than a set of predetermined questions.

Although my lack of Farsi skills may have prevented a barrier to certain aspects of the community, overall the participant interviews, field observations and gatekeepers provided a wealth of rich, in-depth, thick description for discussion. However, this is something that will have to be rectified if I plan to continue researching Iranian diaspora as part of my academic career. Once the PhD is finished it is my intention to enrol on a Farsi language course.

Field Setting

The aim of this study was to get a range of perspectives on ideas of home, belonging and how Iranians living in Newcastle upon Tyne renegotiate their identity whilst attempting to settle in a new space. It was therefore important to include Iranians with an array of different backgrounds: age, gender, class, employment, education and migration patterns. However, there were certain criteria which had to remain the same in order for them to be able to participate, particularly in the biographical interviews. These included:

- Their ability to converse in English. Iranians with limited English language were not included in this study.
- They had to have lived in Iran for a significant period of their life. People who had come over to the UK as children (Under 17) were not included.
- They needed to have lived in Newcastle upon Tyne for more than a year in order to be able to compare experiences between their life in Iran and their life in the UK.

The Iranians who were included in this study came to the UK between 1974 and 2012, originating from two different regions within Iran, the capital city of Tehran and Shiraz a city in south Iran. Those who came over to the UK prior to the Iranian Revolution in 1979 had done so for educational purposes and originated from Tehran. They had come to the UK to study for a university degree with the intention of returning to Iran once their studies were complete. As you will see in the next chapter, the majority of these Iranians never returned to Iran due to the consequences of the Iranian revolution. Iranians who entered the UK after 1979 were considered economic migrants, asylum seekers or refugees searching for a better standard of living and generally had no wish, or plan to return to Iran. This latter cohort originated from both Tehran and Shiraz.

All of the Iranians I interviewed had obtained a high school diploma before their arrival to the UK and described themselves as coming from a middle class background, basing this on their father's occupation. Several Iranians arriving before the Iranian revolution completed university degrees in an UK institution, generally in a discipline of engineering. Of those who

left Iran after the Iranian revolution, some had attained a university degree in a science related discipline or engineering. In order to protect participant anonymity specifics will not be given here and pseudonyms will be used throughout this thesis to protect their identity. It is important to note at this point, that entering university in Iran is an extremely competitive process with only the top 5% of students being considered for the National Universities entry exam, Private University admission criteria is slightly more relaxed but still extremely competitive and expensive.

Whilst I observed a range of different Iranians throughout the various sites of observation in the field, in all, I conducted twenty biographical interviews with five women and fifteen men aged between twenty-six and fifty-nine. Unfortunately, I had to disregard three of the male interviews because they could not engage with the interview question. For example, one male felt uncomfortable with the open scope of the interview and did not want to reveal his biographical history, he subsequently did not sign a consent form thereby removing his participation from the study. I also had to disregard two female interviews because they entered the UK as children. In my ethics approval forms I stated that for the purpose of this thesis I would only be interviewing those who arrived in the UK as adults (over eighteen year olds). This thesis is interested in gaining an understanding of their life experiences in Iran, their process of migration and decision to leave, as well as their experiences of life in the UK, and I decided that those who left Iran as children may not have the life experiences necessary to fully participate. By no means am I disregarding the importance of second generation diasporic Iranian experiences, but rather, acknowledging that I could not cover everything within the remit and scope of this thesis. Second generation Iranians arriving with, or without their parents would be better investigated in a follow up study which could focus solely on their experiences.

The interviews lasted between one and three hours and generally took place at the interviewee's home or workplace or on a few occasions at my gatekeeper's home. I found women within the Iranian community very hard to access and when I did speak to some throughout the ethnographic observations they did not wish to participate within an interview.

This was typically because they were not confident in their English speaking abilities. Therefore, an unintentional public/private divide appeared within the research which corresponded to the patriarchal society from which they originate. It appeared women were mainly confined to the home, whilst men were predominantly in the public arena which is why some of the thematic chapters feature more data from men. This divide was unfortunately beyond my control and whilst the thesis outlines the important role Iranian women play as the curators of Iranian culture within the private sphere (see chapter seven), it also highlights the pressing need for a more robust and comprehensive study exploring the varying experiences of Iranian women living in Newcastle. As I have remained active within this community, I hope new avenues of access to Iranian diasporic women will become available in time.

Of the women I interviewed two are in employment here in the UK and one defines their status as a housewife. The two women who are employed here in the UK were not able to find employment in Iran, even though one was educated to university level in a science related subject. The woman who identifies as a housewife in the UK was employed in Iran as an administrator. Amongst the men I interviewed all were employed in Iran, whether this was for the government e.g. banks, office, army, or self-employed with their own businesses e.g. engineering companies. In the UK these men have taken quite a significant drop in their 'employment statuses', some are unemployed and unable to find work in their area of experience e.g. engineering, whilst a substantial portion of these men, and men in the wider Iranian community (local and regional) have opened their own Takeaway business or work for another Iranian in the Takeaway business. Unfortunately, within this community only a very small proportion of Iranians, male or female, are employed in a field in which they have previously trained e.g. in a trade, or to a university level. Due to the predominance of Iranian men in the public sphere of the diaspora, they were far more accessible and more willing to participate within the study. It is for this reason that they form the largest sample within the study.

As I was raised in connection to the Iranian community being studied, my research on the Iranian diasporic community in Newcastle Upon Tyne was well known, therefore a significant

portion of the interviewees were already known to me and were recruited through word of mouth by one of my two gatekeepers. Similar to other studies conducted on the Iranian diaspora, by fellow Iranians, this study therefore utilised opportunity sampling and relied on the good word of those taking part in the study to attract more people to interview. With regards to participant observations, again, I relied heavily on my interviewees and gatekeepers to invite me to Iranian events of interest (Ghorashi, 2004; Sullivan, 2002; Aidani, 2000; Sherif, 2007). Once a gatekeeper identified someone who was interested in taking part in the study they provided me with their contact details, usually a telephone number, which I then used to arrange a suitable interview date and time, as well as a suitable place. On a few occasions I was approached at Iranian gatherings by people wishing to take part and their interviews were arranged face to face. Iranians who participated in interviews were fully briefed and provided with the relevant consent forms before interview, giving them plenty of time to ask questions and understand their participation. As advised by the Keele Ethics Committee, consent forms and information for observations at events were provided to gatekeepers or event organisers before my attendance, it was then their responsibility to inform their guests that I would be in attendance, and of my research.

Methods

Biographical Interviews

In order to effectively utilise an interpretive ethnographic methodological approach, it is necessary to compliment it with methods which support the philosophical underpinnings of that approach. It is equally important that the methods chosen allow participants to tell *their* story, and to allow *their* experiences to shine through. The biographical method is the collection and analysis of an intensive account of a whole life or portion of a life, usually by an in-depth, unstructured interview. As stated above, the purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of Iranian culture, traditions, and rituals in order to interpret the ways in which Iranians attempt to renegotiate their identity in a new space. This requires a method which allows us to look beyond the surface of actions in order to penetrate the meaning and reasoning behind those actions (Weber, 1949). Rather than concentrating on a 'snapshot' of

an individual's present situation, the biographical approach emphasises the placement of the individual within a nexus of social connections, historical events and life experiences. This thesis was not only interested in how these Iranians lived their life in the UK, but also their experiences of life in Iran, their decision to leave and their process of migration. More importantly it was interested in the ways in which the respondent actively constructs a narrative of their life in response to the social context at the time of interview (Bhabha, 1994).

It is obvious from the questions, aims and objectives of this study that a more structured approach such as structured or semi structured interviews, surveys, or questionnaires would not produce the depth or quality of data this study requires. It is impossible to understand the influence that the world has on another person, without first attempting to view the world from their point of view and immersing ourselves in the reality of those we wish to understand (Weber, 1949; Geertz, 1971; Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1968). The biographical method encourages participants to recount numerous life experiences, in which ever order that they come to the respondent throughout the interview. Therefore, the respondent is generally the one in control with the interviewer playing a more minor role. The role of the interviewer is to keep the conversation flowing by providing buffer questions or further explanation and to allow the participants to express themselves fully and freely whilst encouraging them to provide as much depth as possible. Biographical interviews can therefore be extremely lengthy and run the risk of moving 'off target' or 'off tangent'. Whilst all interviewers will have particular areas of interest e.g. I was interested in experiences of life in Iran, decision to leave and so on, it is difficult, and indeed against the purpose of biographical interviews to *control* or *lead* the respondents interview. Those tangents may provide interesting insights into this person's life or character, and bring certain aspects to the fore which you had maybe not considered prior to interview. Furthermore, as stated above, ethnographers and biographical interviewers are interested in the ways in which the participant chooses to narrate their life story. This also means that the interviewer has no control over whether or not the participant is telling the 'truth' about their experiences, or avoiding the discussion of certain aspects which may paint them in a less favourable light.

Most Iranians within this small community know each other's story of migration, including why they came here, how they came here and their reasons for moving. There were times in my interviews where Iranians would also discuss their friends' lives and share details with me in comparison to their own lives, it was through this that I discovered certain people who I had interviewed had avoided telling me the 'whole story' on certain life experiences, or they had skirted over certain elements in order to present themselves in a different light. Whether they were telling the 'truth' or skirting over the *real* was irrelevant to me, instead it provided an interesting insight into how they (re)construct their identity and make sense of their identity in certain contexts through narration.

In order to provide an open dialogue for the participants I simply asked them to tell me the story of their life, starting at any point they wished. I tried not to provide any more information so as to allow people to begin at their own pace and in their own way. However, if this was too open for some and they struggled to begin, I elaborated by offering examples of where they could start such as: the beginning of the life, their decision to leave Iran, their move to the UK and so on. One person insisted on having a more structured question as his life was too vast and the question too open. After much hesitation I asked him to tell me about his childhood, and after this initial hurdle no other question was necessary, simple buffers allowed the interview to carry on for over two hours. The length of the biographical interviews in this study varied in length between one to three and half hours and contributed an array of rich data to the ethnography.

The data from the biographical interviews were transcribed by me, by hand. I did consider outsourcing, however because I outlined in the participant information that I would be the only person engaging with the raw data, combined with the sensitive nature of some of the stories, I decided it would be best if I did the transcription myself. This was a long and tedious process as most of the biographical interviews were over two hours long; however, it was through this arduous process that I was able to highlight some of the common narratives and themes in the data from an early stage. As I transcribed more interviews I could see similar patterns emerging through my participants' stories which made the coding of the data much more

fruitful and enjoyable. It was also extremely helpful for providing direction within my observer as participant observations as I often used the field to follow up on themes presented in the biographical interviews.

I decided it would be best if I did the data analysis by hand, using colour coded pens and post-it notes to code the various themes that emerged. I was originally going to use the Qualitative Data Analysis tool NVivo. However, using this software made me feel disconnected from the participants' stories because the analysis only presented a snap shot or fragment of the data. As the participants' narratives are central to the thesis I wanted to be able to focus on their stories as a whole. Coding their interviews by hand allowed me more of a connection to their stories and made comparing common themes and similar experiences much easier.

Main Sites of Observer as Participant - Observation

My fieldwork research officially began just before the Iranian New Year (*Nowruz*) in March 2012. This date was chosen because *Nowruz* is one of the main traditions which Iranians celebrate in the diaspora. *Nowruz* meaning 'New Day' in Farsi represents the spirit of renewal and is a time of celebration, joy, happiness, forgetting and reflecting on one's life in order to prepare yourself for the new year ahead. It takes place on the vernal equinox (March 20th/21st), which is the exact time that the last day of winter ends and the new day of spring begins. Beginning fieldwork at this time allowed me to document this important ritual in the lives of the community, their reflections and hopes for the future and how they continue to live their life in accordance with these hopes throughout the rest of the year. The history and meaning behind this tradition as well as, the various ways in which Iranian culture, tradition and ritual are maintained in the UK, will be discussed in my thematic findings in chapter five, six and seven.

Based on the aims and objectives of this thesis, the main sites of observation were centred around activities taking place in the participants' homes, their work place or in connection with the Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi. The Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism was one of the focal areas of observation within this research due to the importance it holds to the members of the diaspora I worked with. The establishment in

which they meet is known as a Khaneghah which means school. I attended the Khaneghah in Gateshead on several occasions and also travelled with the Gateshead members to attend Sufi lessons at the London Khaneghah. These were typically given in Farsi which I listened to through headphones with translation. The London Khaneghah has the largest membership in the UK and is known as the cultural hub for Persian Sufism, hosting a variety of events throughout the year.

As will be discussed in the following chapter, the creation of the diaspora stemmed from the connections Iranian men forged between their takeaway businesses and the takeaway trade. Observing these men in their takeaway shops was therefore a focal area of observation area in order to gain some understanding into how their business is run, who they employ and how they have not only created an ethnic economy but and ethnic support network through this trade.

When interviewing participants at their homes, I noticed that many homes were decorated with an array of Persian Material culture. Previous research on diaspora and material culture demonstrated that such objects connect diasporans to previous homes, providing them with a sense of belonging. Furthermore, they acted as buffers to their identity, reminding them of where they come from. In light of this, I asked participants if I could take photographs of objects which represented their Iranian identity or objects which reminded them of 'home'. Whilst there is an array of research documenting the use of visual methods and visual ethnography (Pink, 2013; Rose, 2013; Harper, 2002) as a means of researching an area of study, this thesis used photographs as a means of supporting the ethnography and observations within the field.

In light of that mentioned above, my thematic findings chapter will discuss my observations of performances, religious events & lessons, birthday celebrations, meals at Persian restaurants or a participant's home, picnics/BBQ's, employment in takeaway shops, ritual & tradition, material culture, hosting and hospitality, participation in British culture and wider society, and so on.

Concluding Remarks

Within this chapter I have attempted to provide a comprehensive understanding of how this research was undertaken. Due to the nature of ethnography and the fact I was studying a non-western community, a significant portion of this chapter was dedicated to providing a reflexive account that detailed my insider/outsider position prior to the research and how this position constantly shifted as the research took place. Throughout the methodological implications I indicated that there was very little research which details the experiences of researchers as intimate insiders, and more specifically even less research which discusses the experiences of researching family members and family friends. Therefore, I hope that my research and experiences within the field can make a contribution to this lack of research and begin to bridge this gap.

The next chapter will use the information gathered throughout the biographical interviews and the sites of observation, to analyse and discuss the main findings and dominant themes which emerged from the data.

Thematic Analysis

Introduction

According to Brah (1996), diaspora as a concept should be used to historicise trajectories of different diasporas, mapping their relationality and what this search for origins signifies about the history of that particular diaspora. This includes how and why originary absolutes are imagined or continuously reimagined and remade. She argues that it is not about who travels but when, how and under what circumstances. By focussing on what diaspora does rather than what it is, we can explore the subjectivity of the diasporans themselves, including their practices, interactions and experiences as well as the ways in which they are constructing their diaspora. Following Brah's perspective the aim of the following three chapters is to present the trajectory of the diaspora through one continuous chronological narrative beginning with its construction, before detailing how it has been reimagined and remade over time by those who live within it. In order to explain the complexity of this diasporic community as coherently and clearly as possible, the chapters are as follows.

Chapter Five: 'Diaspora and the Search for Belonging' details the construction of the Newcastle Iranian Diaspora by weaving together the main themes and participants' stories within the waves of migration to the region. This chapter is mainly told from a male perspective because they dominate the public sphere, and focuses on the ways in which the members of this community attempted to fix the identity of the diaspora and essentialise their Iranian cultural identity in an attempt to distance themselves from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Chapter Six: 'Hybridity and the Third Space: Re-negotiating Identity with the In-betweens will – as the title suggests – outline how even though the members of this diaspora attempt to essentialise their Iranian cultural identity on the one hand, they also acknowledge their cultural hybridity on the other. It will discuss how the diaspora was formed in the tensions between identity, location, culture and belonging, and more specifically how it was formed in the tensions between their reimagined idea of Iran as home, and their desire to create a sense of

home and belonging in Newcastle upon Tyne. Furthermore, it will introduce the Maktab Tarighat School of Islamic Sufism as an example of Bhabha's third space, allowing multiple identities to intersect and play out.

Chapter Seven: 'Living in the in-betweens: Re-imagining Iran as home in Newcastle and the Performance of Identity' is predominantly orientated towards the female perspective as they dominate the private sphere. The aim of this chapter is to compliment and conclude the findings from the previous chapters by visually demonstrating how Iranians live in the in-betweens of location, culture and belonging as the attempt to make a home away from home. Capturing the fluidity and hybridity of their identity as it is performed in the banal minutiae of everyday life.

Chapter Five

DIASPORA AND THE SEARCH FOR BELONGING

The aim of this chapter is to explore the storied construction of an Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne through the life stories told to me by some of its members. In a similar framework to the majority of diaspora literature it will begin by tracing the origins of this diaspora and discussing the reasons for its formation and transformation as it reproduced itself anew (Hall, 1990). In doing so, it will focus on the stories of two waves of Iranians migrating to Newcastle upon Tyne over a period of four decades, discussing the reasons behind their migration and how they adapted into UK society. Weaving the main themes through their stories and waves of migration this chapter will show how these Iranians consider themselves to be 'cosmopolitan' people who can adapt into any society; however, this is juxtaposed with their inability to tolerate certain *other* members of their Iranian diaspora. The final section of this chapter will explore the reasons behind this intolerance and how it has led to the fragmentation of this once imagined 'cohesive' diasporic community.

First Wave Iranians and the Formation of a Diaspora

The story of the Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne begins over forty years ago when Iranians chose to come to the UK for higher education. Those arriving within this wave of migration were predominantly male. At that time diplomatic relations between Iran and the West were stable and from the 1950s the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, actively encouraged Iranians to seek education in the west. In fact, it became a symbol of 'status' with families using their children's education in the west as a means of social advancement, especially when it came to the prospects of marriage. Saman, a first generation Iranian from Tehran came to the UK in 1978 for a western education because his offer of courtship and marriage had been declined by the woman's family. At the time he worked in a bank in Tehran, in the same profession as his father and considered himself to be from a middle class

background. When this was deemed not 'good enough' he decided to seek further education at university because in Iran, education is perceived as *the* only means of social betterment, and what better way to propel ones 'status' than by obtaining a degree from a western university. His best friend was already living in the North East of England in the town of Gateshead whilst he studied at Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic, so Saman decided to join him and complete an English language course which would then allow him to enrol at a college.

Gateshead Town

For this particular Iranian diaspora in the North East, Gateshead appeared to be the founding area for the formation of this Iranian community as it featured prominently in every story I was told whether this was because the person studied there, lived there or worked there. Iranians have since spread out across the entirety of the Tyne and Wear area including Durham, South Tyneside, Newcastle and Sunderland but it is the purpose of this section to discuss the attraction of Gateshead and how this diaspora began to form.

Gateshead is a metropolitan borough in the county of Tyne and Wear which lies on the southern bank of the River Tyne, opposite the City of Newcastle. Known for its symbolic structure 'The Angel of the North', the district is currently home to approximately 200,200 inhabitants. 2011 ONS statistics for the area show that 96% of Gateshead residents are White, with 1.9% describing themselves as Asian, 0.5% Black, 0.8% Mixed and 0.5% describing their ethnicity as other (Gateshead Council and ONS statistics). The area was once firmly dependent on heavy industry such as steel making, ship building and coal mining making these the main source of employment in the area until their gradual closure throughout 1974-1984. With the decline of these industries Gateshead has attempted to reinvent itself, and whilst there are areas of significant deprivation, Gateshead Quayside, which was once dominated by industry has benefitted from significant investment in the last decade and is now home to the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and the Sage Gateshead (Gateshead Council).

Although the 2011 ONS statistics show that 96% percent of Gateshead residents are white, over the last few decades Gateshead has become increasingly more diverse. This is not only evidenced by ONS statistics (ethnicity and religion) but also by the vast amount of small self-employed businesses providing custom for a variety of cultures. For example, Coatsworth road in Bensham is home to businesses that cater towards a variety of cultures including Polish, Pakistani, Kurdish, Iranian and Jewish. Typically, these are in the form of supermarkets, bakeries and butchers supplying Halal and Kosher foods.

The boroughs predominant religion was 67% Christian, with 1% identifying as Muslim, 23.9% with no religion and 1.5% as Jewish. Gateshead is actually home to a sizeable community of Haredi Jews (a stream of Orthodox Judaism) with 3,004 residents (ONS statistics 2011) and also acclaimed for its Jewish higher educational institutions. This Jewish diasporic community, largely located in the Bensham area of Gateshead was established towards the end of the 19th century and following the Holocaust, Gateshead became home to the largest Orthodox Jewish education complex in post-war Europe, as well as an essential centre of Torah Judaism. Gateshead Talmudical College is an important and well known Haredi Yeshiva and attracts students from all over the world (Gateshead Council).

Living the Western Education Dream

Comparatively, it was Gateshead College which brought a vast number of Iranians to the North East of England, as Amin describes in his life story:

‘When we were in Iran, we had an exam to come to either America or England. My father was in the army and he didn’t want me to follow his position. Anyway, I tried to pass that one a few times [...] and then I passed. So I had to wait for application from a college or university to come to England, and finally I got one from Gateshead College. It was 1975 [...] I arrived on 23rd August 1975 [...] I went to Gateshead college in the September and I started a course, you know, to take a A level because obviously we, our diploma [in Iran], we had few O level’.

'I think there were about 30 of us altogether in Gateshead college [...] We were all living more or less in Gateshead area, because you know we were all.... getting a flat or sharing flat with each other you know we, we all just round here'.

A town formed through industry, Gateshead town and Gateshead College was a popular choice with Iranians because it provided OND (Ordinary National Diploma) courses in subjects related to Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, a qualification which would allow them to enter a British University. Furthermore, it was a cheap place to live and conveniently located across the river from the City of Newcastle. However, whilst a significant portion of the Iranians migrating to the UK throughout the 1970s for education came by choice, I also spoke to someone who was forced to leave Iran during this time. Kamran was 15 years old when his parents made him leave his country and his story begins as follows:

'I came to England in 1979, exactly the year the revolution happened. I was involved in the revolution myself. I had just finished high school and my parents saw my involvement [was] too much in the revolution. I was against the existing regime which was Shah's regime and that was because we were all sort of manipulated by the people you know? We were young, we didn't know much and that's when I moved out. I didn't actually move out, my parents pushed me out. I already had two brothers living in England'.

As discussed in the introduction, there were a combination of events leading to the 1979 revolution which culminated in the deposing of the Monarchy in Iran. One of these being the rise in younger intellectuals (particularly from university) and their anti-imperialist ideas regarding Iran's economic dependency on America. They no longer believed in the states brand of nationalism, secularist reforms and the Shah's concession to Western powers, turning to the Islamic opposition and the idealised image of Khomeini as the symbol of a unique indigenous identity which Iran had lost (Kelley, 1993). As a young man, Kamran

became caught up in the protests and in fear for his life his parents forced him to move to England to finish his education under the care of his brothers.

Whilst migrating for education is not uncommon in the literature on the Global Iranian Diaspora, much of the earlier research, particularly in America, concentrates on Iranians who were forced to leave Iran or exiled from Iran because of their political affiliation (Ghorashi, 2004; Sullivan, 2002; Kelley, 1993). This was not something I found prominent within this diaspora in Newcastle. I only spoke to one Iranian who left Iran for these reasons. Azad was exiled from his homeland because he was black listed by his country. He held a position of authority in the Shah's Royal Navy and as I discussed in the introduction, a significant amount of people holding high positions of power in the Shah's armed forces were assassinated by the Islamic Republic. Azad survived the change in power but found it difficult to live and work under the new regime,

'I wasn't the opposition.. they always question this one, that one... the revolutionary guard. They want you to go along with them and if not, you out the circle. I couldn't live the way they wanted and after that I runaway, I escaped!'

Azad explained how even the mundane everyday life experiences of Iranians became monitored by the new regime, for example whether you prayed, what clothes you wore and even personal grooming e.g. why you did not have a beard. It cloaked Iranian public and private spheres and if you did not conform to the regimes way of life you were monitored and surveyed.

Regardless of their reasons to leave Iran, through residing in Gateshead; attending college, language school, parties and word of mouth, Iranians came to know of fellow Iranians and the makings of an Iranian community started to form.

'In the beginning we used to meet in Eldon Square in Newcastle and go for coffees with each other, catch up and chat with each other' - *Saman, 2012*.

'Yeah there was nothing here for us, nothing, there was not even a kebab shop, I think [name] opened it, oh 30 years ago, just one, there not a[ny] pizza shop or anything. There was nothing like that. But really we just getting together at each-others house and you know, eat something together and going out together, that's it. You know if we went to the discos or party we were all seeing each other, if it was a new year we were seeing each other that was it' - *Amin, 2012*.

Sojourner to Settler

For the Iranians I spoke to, their time in the North East was only meant to be temporary whilst they completed their education. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, namely the Iranian Islamic revolution their stay ended up becoming permanent. Two years after the revolution, Iraq invaded Iran perceiving their revolutionary upheaval as weakness and this started the onset of the eight years Iran/Iraq War. Many Iranians who planned to return to their homeland during this time were urged by their families to stay away. Dara, another first generation Iranian who came to the North East in 1974 told me how he was affected by the trouble in his homeland.

'So I left Iran in 1974 and had a friend in Durham. ...I come to Durham and start studying English. My intention was to do two years English... and two years diploma in automobile engineering. Then I go [back] to Iran on a two years course, I [could] get my degrees and in one years my masters [at] university of Tehran'

But what actually happened,

'I start [to] do two years in English... I went to college of Gateshead and did automobile engineering and I was ready to pack up my bag to go.. when the revolution start[ed]. Then, I be told by my parents it's not time to come back to Iran so can I do something else? At the time being, Maggie Thatcher came in power and all the colleges suddenly went £700 to £3,600 a year to do any other courses. As the money had stopped in Iran we didn't know when the next

money coming [...] I knew colleges in Northern Ireland still charge same as England was doing few years ago so I went to Ireland. I was there for three years [doing] civil engineering [...] So when everything finished in Ireland I still wanted to come back, and get ready to go to Iran but the family was saying it's not a right time to come back and can you stay there for a bit longer.

So the situation was...when I finished in Ireland I came back to Newcastle, my brother was living there now so I stayed with him. I send my documentation and certificate to Iran and we translate it to the degree [equivalent there] so I was over the moon [that it was accepted]. So I was waiting, it was a waiting game to see what is happening, if the war was gunna stop or whatever? [...] I was still hoping, waiting until the situation get alright [...] and at the same time I have applied to see if I get a political asylum to stay'.

Like many Iranians in his position Dara was forced to wait in limbo, 'the myth of return' meant that some Iranians were 'waiting with their suitcases packed' for the political situation in Iran to change (Spellman, 2004). I was repeatedly told throughout the course of my research how many Iranians intended to return to Iran when the impact of the revolution died down, as they firmly believed the Islamic Republic would not remain in power and their homeland would return to normal. However, when the Iran/Iraq war started immediately after the revolution their hopes that Iran would return to 'normal' then moved to coincide with the end of the war. Unfortunately, when the war ended the Islamic Republic remained strong and so they switched their concentration to the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, believing its popularity would dissipate with his death. When he died in 1989 and Iran remained in the control of the Islamic Republic, it finally led to a shift in their self-perception, 'from being sojourners to settlers' (Spellman, 2004:42) and the myth of return to the physical homeland was replaced by bringing aspects of Iran to Newcastle.

Re-Settlement

Throughout the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution and the duration of Iran/Iraq war many of the Iranians who had come to the North East for education had carried on their life as normal.

The situation in Iran was not safe, nor was life under the Islamic Republic very appealing so they chose to concentrate on their life in the UK. This wave of Iranians described their resettlement in the UK as easy because they grew up in an Iran which was becoming increasingly westernised under the Shah. Ethnic, religious and geographical allegiances gave way to class distinctions and a national identity. The modernisation programs of Iran were based on western models of economic development. Western companies such as British Petroleum were located in Iran near the Persian Gulf and there were western cultural establishments such as public houses, nightclubs and casinos as alcohol was then legal. Iranians were encouraged to wear western dress and Islamic dress such as the headscarf and *chador* were banned (Kelley, 1993). Therefore, upon entering the UK there would not have been such an element of 'culture shock'. Furthermore, most of the Iranian males I interviewed went on to marry English women and have mixed race children, which may have assisted them in their process of resettlement.

As many had finished their education by the mid-1980s they turned their attention to finding suitable employment. However, this also coincided with a recession which found 3 million people in the UK unemployed by 1986 (The Telegraph, 2009) with the North of England being some of the worst effected with around 20% of people unemployed. Iranians living in Gateshead and the surrounding areas of South Tyneside, Newcastle, Sunderland and Durham found it difficult to find employment even though they were recently graduated from UK educational institutions. When asked whether they believed they were overlooked because of their ethnicity the response was mixed. Saman stated that 'at the time even British people were struggling to get a job as it was during Thatcher's time', however Amin, who holds a BSc in Maths and Statistics felt differently:

'When I finish my BSc I've a got married then. While I was applying for jobs, I think there was a rejection because my name was foreign, so I changed my name, my second name to Smith which is my wife's name and then I got a job at MFI furniture which was in Gateshead High Street. I worked for about two

years as a sales man and then they asked me if you want to go to management and I went to management for another three years’.

Whilst Amin was able to get a sales job within a well-known company, it was not in the area in which he was educated. Many of the male Iranians found it extremely difficult to find jobs within their area of education and this finding coincides with similar research in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden (Ghorashi, 2004; Graham and Khosravi, 1997) which I mentioned in chapter two. Saman discussed how he sent hundreds of applications for electrical engineering apprenticeships and employment but was met with constant rejection. It was at this time, during the 1980s that many Iranian men began opening up their own Takeaway businesses. Saman explained that in Iran, if you couldn't be a doctor or an engineer you opened your own business.

‘I got into takeaway business through my friend Mohammad who I met at college. After I trained as electrical engineer I couldn't get a job so was looking for other things. Like me, he had no money but he had just married his wife [English] and she could take out a loan from the bank. She took out a loan and he bought a takeaway shop so I started working for him, learning all the things in the shop. After some time I had the opportunity to open my own shop. I have since taught other Iranians the trade’ – *Saman, 2012*.

He opened his takeaway business in 1989 and explained that at that time it was the ‘best way to make money’ because there were hardly any other takeaway shops proudly stating how he had the only one on Gateshead High Street. The appeal of making lots of money quickly, is what seems to have encouraged a proliferation of Iranian men to open Takeaway businesses in the 1980s and 1990s. This subsequently created an Iranian business and social network which would become a central way for the Iranian diaspora to flourish and aid future waves of Iranian migrants to settle into life in the UK.

The Takeaway Trade

People from a number of different ethnic minority groups have entered the catering trade in Britain and in other western countries. Most notable is the presence of Hong Kong migrants, particularly in the Midlands, and their takeover of the 'traditional British' fish and chip shops (Watson, 1997; Parker 1994). These studies indicate that the proprietors were generally relatively uneducated and rarely spoke English which meant that they had limited job prospects in the wider British labour market (Harbottle, 2000). In contrast, Iranians within the takeaway catering trade residing in Newcastle were typically very well educated and spoke fluent English. Harbottle (2000) found that Iranians entered the takeaway catering trade because of the decline in British Economy, the increase in overseas tuition fees and the uncertain political situation in Iran which prevented them from receiving money from their families. The same can be said for Iranians in Newcastle as Dara explains:

'so the situation was things were going badly in Iran when I finished study from Ireland, so I came back to Newcastle. My brother was living in Newcastle so I stayed with him. I wanted to do another course to get a visa to stay in the country another year. So applied to the postgraduate diploma in Sunderland polytechnic. At the time I had about £4000 and I could've studied another year with that as the fee was £3,600. I was in the course for two months and I still was two minded, 'should I study or should I open the business with it?' but I still didn't have a work permit I had no visa or nothing. I thought what if situation in Iran doesn't get alright? have I just wasted that money? It's a last chance I've got, at the time I was about 26, 27, I was getting a bit older. So I made my mind up not to go to Sunderland uni. I find a friend of mine who had the same amount of money but he also had a work permit, so he says how about opening some kind of takeaway shop together? And I just thought, I'm well educated it's not the job I want to do, but I look for a shop and eventually we find one. I couldn't become a partner with him, so I made my brother partner because he had a work permit [through marriage]. I ran the shop for them'.

In her study of Iranians in the Midlands Harbottle (2000) noted that an increasing concentration of Iranians within the takeaway business was leading to the development of an ethnic economy⁷ which served to attract other Iranians. The same can be said for the Iranians in Newcastle. By the mid-1980s Iranians living in Gateshead, South Tyneside, Newcastle and Durham were steadily becoming connected through snow balling; i.e. someone knew someone who knew someone else and this was mainly achieved through College, University or English Language school. However, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s this network expanded and tightened when certain Iranians became well known in the Iranian community because of their successes in the takeaway trade. This led to an influx of Iranians trying their hand at the business with many forming partnerships with fellow Iranians to get started. Saman explained that by the 1990s there were Iranians working in all corners of the takeaway and restaurant trade including wholesalers, kebab factories, packaging companies and catering equipment companies. For example, influenced by his experiences of working in his brother's takeaway shop, Kamran noticed a chance to open a wholesaling business and Kebab factory after finishing his studies in Electrical Engineering at Sunderland Polytechnic:

'I started opening my own business which was wholesaling catering business [...] selling all the foods you need [for takeaway businesses], all the ingredients [also] I opened the first donner kebab factory in South Shields as well. Up to that day everybody used to make the donner kebabs at the back of the shops and it was a messy job [...] that business was very good, I was doing that business for eight years, I made a lot of money at that time but I was very young, I didn't appreciate the value of money I used to just spend it'.

Even Iranians working within the 'mainstream economy' opted to join this 'ethnic economy', for example, Amin decided to leave his nine-to-five position at MFI to open several businesses in Stanley, Bishop Auckland and Crook within County Durham with a close Iranian friend:

⁷ Ethnic Economy refers to individual minority employment sectors that coexist with the mainstream economy (Light, Sabagh, Borzorgmehr and Der-Martirosian, 1993)

'I went and had a look a shop in Stanley which was doing very badly, I said I don't want to work for yous if you want I'll buy it off you. So me and my partner [Iranian business partner] bought together that one and then from there I seen another shop in Bishop Auckland so I moved on there and my partner [in Stanley] bought my share. I worked there [Bishop Auckland] for two years... then we got another shop in Pelton, then I just moved on to buy shops after shops, after shops. I think all together was about eight at one point [...] I had people running them, I was doing all the paperworks [...] after 7/8 years I started reducing them because it was far too much [...] I was running three, renting one, sold another two [...] then I opened a restaurant. Restaurant business is good but hard, takeaway...really .. we made our money from the takeaway' – *Amin, 2012.*

As you can see from these quotes, the desire to make money is something that came across very strongly among the life stories of the Iranian men I interviewed. Their male identities and status within the community were hinged upon being successful; to be successful you needed to make lots of money and own your own business. Iran is a patriarchal society and as discussed by Graham and Khosravi (1997) and Lewin (2001) Iranian male identity is founded on their 'breadwinner' status. Therefore, whilst the declining British economy, increase in overseas tuition and uncertain political situation in Iran may have influenced their decision to enter the takeaway trade, the most common reason for Iranians entering the takeaway trade in my study was the fact that it was 'fast easy money'.

'Was hard to go into other businesses because we didn't have much money. Takeaway is quick money in hand, we get involved in this business as easiest way forward' – *Azad, 2012.*

Once Iranians started opening up businesses within various areas of the takeaway trade an Iranian business network (ethnic economy) became established. Iranians would employ other Iranians to work for them, and sell their businesses onto fellow Iranians within the trade, or

those starting off in the trade. This became central to the formation of this diasporic community because this business network not only provided them with a source of income, it provided them with a way to settle and create a sense of belonging within British society, whilst also serving as a platform of cultural socialisation.

‘Because we were all in the same kind of business, i.e takeaways so we used to go play snooker after when we close the shop. We used go to the snooker till late in the morning, four, five am in the morning because a kebab lifestyle is a night lifestyle you know? We used to [be] in touch with each other quite a lot this way’ – *Kamran, 2012*.

It provided a diasporic space ‘a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes.... where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed and disavowed’ (Brah, 1996:208). This is similar to the work of David Parker on the Chinese diaspora in the UK. He demonstrates how Chinese restaurants and suburban takeaways provided migrants with a place from where a sustainable familial presence could be established. By the 1960s an informal clustering of Chinese businesses, community organisations and social clubs emerged around the Hurst Street area of Birmingham city centre. This area is now at the heart of celebrating cultural traditions such as the Chinese new year. In a similar vein, this Iranian business network in Newcastle became a way of creating a ‘cohesive’ community which not only supported each other through their businesses, but also became a platform to unite and celebrate cultural traditions such as those surrounding the Iranian new year.

Introducing Persia to Newcastle

In chapter three within the subchapter ‘Theoretical and Empirical Understandings of Home and Belonging’, I discuss how migrant’s perceptions and dreams of home and belonging are driven by memories of prior homes and by notions of where ‘we’ came’ from (Stock, 2010). In line with classic diaspora research, once Iranians residing in the region of Newcastle realised that their stay in the UK was going to be on a permanent basis there became a desire to preserve, maintain and *recreate* aspects of Iranian culture, traditions, and rituals. A desire to remain

connected to *their* idea of Iran as home, in order to create a sense of home and belonging in Newcastle. As Esman (2011) states, diasporic individuals are economically and occupationally in the host country but socially and culturally in the home country. Therefore, diaspora is not really about longing for another space but about an effort to be part of the host country on one's own terms (Gilroy, 1987).

In her study of Iranians in London, Spellman (2004) outlines that prior to the Iranian revolution there was very little effort by Iranians to maintain a unified collective identity or to form a cohesive community. However, the first wave Iranians whom I interviewed constantly referred to how they created the Iranian community in Newcastle and this community was based on their shared experiences of migration, education, political upheaval in Iran which prevented their return, and their familial relationships. This is a classic example of diasporic identity as these perceived shared experiences were grounds for creating a 'cohesive' community where Iranians were always behind each other, thereby giving them a sense of home and belonging in a new space:

'well, the community, at the beginning we all had the feeling. We all wanted the same thing. Ok we are out of Iran but we've all got a English wife, we've got the kids that they are half Iranian and half English and we want them to meet each other and at the same time we are in the business, we wanna talk to each other, this and that. So we created this small community and we were so happy' – *Kamran, 2012*.

'At the beginning when we came in here we had a very close Iranian community, we used to celebrate our new years and all the Iranians they used to go. They used to, you know all the parties, all the Iranians used to be behind each other' – *Kamran, 2012*.

One of the main ways in which Iranians in Newcastle united together outside of their Takeaway businesses was through the celebration of Iranian New Year (Nowruz). This was the one time of the year where hundreds of Iranians would get together and celebrate their Iranian identity in the public sphere. As a young girl I remember getting really excited for

Iranian New Year because it was the one time of the year where I got to see all of my Iranian and mixed race friends together in the same place, and because it was usually followed by a day off school the next day! Due to a significant portion of Iranian men working in the takeaway business with their busiest evenings being at the weekend, the big Iranian New Year party was typically held midweek so more Iranians could attend. There was then a choice of other smaller parties which took place at restaurants owned by fellow Iranians. The big New Year party was typically organised by a small group of Iranians, as Kamran explains below

'This was part of the things we did [...] we put money in the pot, we never even, I had no intention of making money out of it, this is a time I told you I was well off. [With that money] we had [Iranian] singers come from America to perform, we had food made by caterers from a local Iranian cello kebob shop. We lost money, we didn't think about making money, it wasn't about that [...] as long as my kids, my family, as long as they were happy that's all that mattered [...] We brought this singers in just to get everybody together, you know?' – *Kamran, 2012*.

While the adults danced to Iranian music, socialised and discussed business, we children would run riot round the huge nightclub playing games such as hide and seek and tiggy with usually some kind of boys versus girls rivalry. What was important about this event was 1) the connection it created to other Iranian diasporas around the world, and 2) its attempts to reconnect to their re-imagined idea of Iran. By bringing Iranian singers over from American Iranian diasporas they are able to imagine their connection to like-minded Iranians on a global scale, and re-constructing Iranian new year in Newcastle is a way of reimagining Iran as home in a new space, celebrating it in a way that Iranians in Iran could not celebrate. As Clifford (1994) states:

'Diasporist discourses reflect the sense of being part of an on-going transnational network that includes the homeland, not as something simply left behind, but as a place of attachment in contrapuntal modernity' (1994:311)

In an effort to be part of the host country on their own terms, throughout the 1980s and 1990s various establishments dedicated towards Iranian culture, customs and religion began to surface within Newcastle and the surrounding areas. One of the first Iranian institutions to develop in Newcastle was the Iranian centre on Westgate road. Organised by settled Iranians, the Iranian centre offered advocacy and guidance on asylum, housing, education support and health as well as language support and information on the local area. Many Iranians, particularly the third wave migrants (discussed later in this chapter), described how the Iranian centre was their first port of call upon arriving in Newcastle upon Tyne, providing them with access to the local Iranian community and thus aiding their re-settlement. Other establishments appearing throughout this time also included those which catered towards Iranian custom and religious traditions, such as the Islamic Centre *Hoseiniyeh* on Bentik Road in Newcastle, and later, the Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi (MTO) School of Islamic Sufism in Birtley, Gateshead.



Figure 2: Name of Persian Restaurant in Newcastle City Centre

Establishments such as Persian Restaurants, and Grocery Stores stocking Iranian food items served to accommodate their cultural needs. Prior to this Iranians could only access relevant herbs, spices, confectionary items such as nuts, sweets and biscuits from their family in Iran who would send them food parcels every other month. However, after the Islamic revolution this became more difficult and so a niche in the market arose. Saman explained that as there

were already a couple of grocery stores catering for Pakistani communities in the area, such stores expanded their stock to cater for Iranian cuisine.



Figure 3: Left - Range of Herbs and Spices used in Iranian food; Top Right: example of Continental Food Store in Gateshead; Bottom Right: Iranian Confectionery items on sale.

The introduction of establishments catering towards Iranian customs and religious traditions such as the Islamic Centre *Hoseiniyeh* the MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism, as well as those which accommodate their cultural needs such as Persian restaurants, all serve as a connection to *their* idea of home. For example, the Persian restaurants not only provide Iranians with the ability to sample their homeland cuisine and socialise outside of their businesses, it is a means of reimagining Iran, reimagining their memories of home and reconstructing them in Newcastle. These restaurants are adorned with Persian art, tapestry and ornaments including symbols signifying a connection to the Achaemenid Empire and the founding of the 'great Persian empire' as well as, Reza Shah Pahlavi, the former King of Iran

mentioned in the introductory chapter. Symbols representing the Iran they once lived in but an Iran that no longer exists. Hamid Naficy (1993) refers to this as Syncretic Re-archization.

Syncretic Re- Archization



Figure 4: These photos depict the internal decoration of Persian restaurants in Newcastle city centre: Top left - Portrait of Mohammad Reza Shah and Queen Farah Pahlavi; Top middle - Soldiers depicted on Murals related to King Daryoush the Great from Achaemenid empire.

Syncretic re-archization is an attempt to invoke a period in one's history before it was contaminated by another (Naficy, 1993). In relation to the Iranian diaspora, it is a way for Iranians (living outside of Iran) to (re)construct their identity through an Iranian past that revitalises either the pre-Islamic time or the pre-revolution period. In other words, Iranians in diaspora re-create an *imagined* Iran which represents an idealised secular Iran lost in time and

space (Anderson, 1992). This imagined Iran is achieved through their collective memories, rituals, traditions, symbols and habitus, or what Avtar Brah (1996) refers to as 'homing desire' and helps them to create a sense of home and belonging in a new space, a third space in-between their re-imaginings of Iran as home and their desire to create a home in Newcastle. This then provides them with an arena in which to renegotiate their cultural identity and create routes into British society.

Similar to the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles, known as Irangeles or Tehrangeles, I argue that this diaspora in the region of Newcastle is a representation of the nostalgic years prior to the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. As discussed in the introductory chapter, in order to create a holistic national identity throughout his reign, Shah Reza Pahlavi linked his dynasty back to the founding of the Achaemenid Empire led by King Cyrus (*Kurosh*) the Great, a time when the Persian Empire was at its greatest. Like all national identities the emphasis on origins and timelessness are represented through national histories, literature, symbols and rituals producing meanings about the nation with which we can then identify. However, when the Shah was deposed with the Iranian revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini founded the Islamic Republic of Iran, a new national identity and national culture was forged which centred on the arrival of Islam to Iran circa 660BC. The Iranians who migrated to Newcastle throughout the 1970s largely oppose the Islamic regime in Iran and do not identify with this image of Iran. This is similar to findings by Morley and Robins (1995) in their book '*There's no place like Heimat: Images of home (land)*'. After World War II Germans lost their sense of homeland national identity because it was associated with Nazi Aryan Germany. In order to feel a sense of belonging to a nation and homeland Morley and Robins suggest that Germans turned to their language, dialect and culture. Iranians within this diaspora in Newcastle consistently referred to their 'rich Persian culture' and their 'ancient Persian history' in order to distance themselves from the image of Iran under the Islamic Republic.

Naficy found that many Iranian exiles in LA promoted a brand of Persian nationalism which identified Iran with pre-Islamic symbols and glorified the achievements of the ancient Persian Empire. For Iranians living in the LA diaspora, Irangeles is a more 'realistic' and acceptable

representation of *their* Iran than the 'real' country of Iran. It is a 'hyper real' construction. Whilst Naficy (1994) observed this glorification of pre-Islamic Persian through popular culture and televisual productions, within the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle this identification is evident through the banality of their everyday life. Through the ways in which they reconstruct their culture, traditions and rituals as well as, through pre-Islamic symbols in the form of memorabilia displayed in their homes and in cultural establishments such as Persian restaurants (this will be discussed further in themes surrounding the performance of identity). It is also evident in the way in which they narrate their 'authentic' Iranian identity, which will be covered later in this chapter.

Through the post-colonial concepts of identity discussed in chapter three and existing literature on Tehrangeles outlined in chapter two, I argue that the Iranian diaspora is a stereotype which allows Iranians in Newcastle to maintain their ideas of pre-Islamic Iran as home (the fetish). It allows them to deny the loss of their homeland, however, this is not a loss relating to their inability to return to the homeland in the sense of the Jewish Diaspora (explored in chapter three), it is rather a loss to their Persian culture and history with the creation of the Islamic Republic. In order to maintain this fetish, the diaspora is a stereotype which represents an Iran no longer exists; this Iran remains only in the past, lodged in the memories, rituals, traditions and habitus of its former residents (explored later in Chapter Seven). These collective memories, rituals, symbols and signifiers are reborn as the stereotype and fetish which then serve as the base for the reinvention and reconstruction of Iran somewhere new, an Iran which fits in with their holistic imaginings. That is, until the diaspora was confronted by a different image of Iran as home, and a different perception of what it means to be an Iranian with the arrival of a third wave of Iranian migrants.

Third Wave Iranians

A third wave of Iranian emigrants have moved to the UK over the last 20 years and can be separated into two distinct groups. Hakimzadeh (2006) identifies these groups as 1) highly skilled individuals leaving universities and research institutions, a continuation of the previous

wave, and 2) working class labour migrants and economic migrants, sometimes with lower education levels and fewer transferable skills. My research also identified two distinct groups within this wave however, what was strikingly prominent was that one of these groups was accepted and embraced by the existing Iranian community, whilst the other was deemed as 'other' and placed in the position of 'outsiders'. The two distinct groups within Newcastle did not necessarily follow those outlined above by Hakimzadeh (2006). After further investigation into this distinction it became apparent that this divide was actually due to the dominant political culture that was in power whilst they grew up in Iran. The first group were born under the reign of the Shah and experienced the effects of Iranian revolution first hand whether this was as children, teenagers or adults. Whereas the second group were born under the rule of the Islamic regime and were brought up within this political context. Unfortunately, these 'outsiders' were difficult to locate empirically and are only identified in the biographical interviews of those I interviewed from the first wave and 'accepted' third wave. They are known within this Iranian community as Khomeini's kids. The next section of this chapter will discuss the appearance of the 'accepted' Iranians who were welcomed into the community and guided through their resettlement process, whilst Khomeini's kids or the 'unaccepted' Iranians positioned as the outsiders will be discussed in the section 'Political Culture and the Fragmentation of the Iranian diaspora'.

The Economic Western Dream

As discussed in chapter one and two, a vast majority of the research on the Iranian diaspora outlines three noticeable waves of migration with the first wave taking place prior to 1979, the second occurring between 1979 – 1995, and the latter arriving between 1995 – to the present day. However, within my research I did not meet a significant portion of Iranians arriving within the second wave. It is for this reason that my research concentrates on the first wave and third wave Iranians.

After the first wave of Iranian migrants the most significant years of migration in my research were between the years 2000 and 2002. I interviewed eight Iranians who came to the UK during this time and met several more throughout the ethnography. This is also supported

statistically with the ONS showing a large increase in Iranian asylum applications to the UK in 2000 with a total of 34,343, the largest amount since 1986 (Hakimzadeh, 2006). As mentioned within the introductory chapter, unlike the two previous waves this wave was caused by Iran's economic crisis, deteriorating human rights record, surveillance of everyday life and diminishing opportunities. Some of which will be discussed in the following life stories of third wave Iranians who were accepted and embraced by the existing Iranian community. These individuals come from a mixture of backgrounds, for example: four originated from Tehran in Northern Iran, three from Shiraz in Southern Iran and one who originated from the province of Khuzestan but was forced to move to Isfahan and then Tehran due to the invasion of their province throughout the war. There was also a mix of education backgrounds with four having obtained degrees in Iran, two had trades e.g. in electronics or welding and two were educated to high school level. Some moved to the UK with their young families, some came alone in order to prepare a home for their family to join them later, others were single and came to join family already living here, whilst others were single and had no family live here. All asserted they came from a middle class background whether this was based on their own status or that of their parents, and the majority were between 30-40 years old when they decided to leave Iran. This meant that these Iranians had experienced the Iranian revolution as children/teenagers or young adults and then lived through the changes enforced by the Islamic republic. They also experienced living through the Iran/Iraq war, Iran's declining economy and the increased surveillance upon Iranian society. All of these individuals chose to leave Iran because of diminished life chances and perceived the UK as a place of freedom and opportunity.

For example, Saeed has a degree in political science and claimed asylum in the UK alone in 2001 at the age of 39 because he was struggling to survive in the declining economy of Iran. He told me how he lost two jobs because of his complaints about Iranian society and how living his everyday life became an uphill battle:

'I finish[ed] my university and started to have a job, but because of the..
some... you know stupid rules in Iran... I was sacked twice of my job, right [...]

I was skilled in my jobs, I liked my jobs but... I can compare it with the communist, you know like they interview you, you should be faithful to the government, if not you have no chance to have the job, right?

[Iran was] getting worse and worse in economic and its affect everybody private life and I was that kind of the man to earn money, honest money, you know I couldn't even involve myself with some other people who just using bribe money and cheating people. It was hard for me to stay and work like this. I working hard about 16 hrs hard work and then I decided to change my life and I knew that I cannot a stay anymore in that country, in that situation and I make plan to come UK'.

Saeed chose to come to the UK because he perceived the West as somewhere where everyone has equal opportunities:

'The pictures in my mind was from the places being very brilliant you know? I didn't think that the streets and the people the same as us, some people are poor and they are very posh. I thought that everybody in high position, high class here [in UK] you know?'

Farhad specialised in electronics and mobile phone repairs whilst living in Iran. For unknown reasons, Farhad was subject to constant harassment by the plain clothed religious officers known as the *basij*. He claimed asylum in the UK in the year 2000 as he could no longer live in a place where he was arrested for simply living his every-day life.

'Do you know basij? The basij are like the police from government but they don't have the uniform. They are like normal people, normal people who say they wanna be basij... god.... So they can stop you or question, or even take you to police station for no reason. That is something bad in Iran. I was one of those always getting involved with those [basij] for no reason coz as I said, I lived in different world. I had a very long hair, which the government didn't like it, I used to be wear the t-shirt like brand new, different shapes and government

didn't like [...] Always I had problem with those, little by little, little by little I get hate of the government and those people helping [...] They want you to do whatever they said [when] they are not. They tell me ok, pray 5 times a day, [when] they don't believe it and they don't do it, they just pretend. So this things you know in my mind'.

He perceived the West as somewhere where he could be free to live as he pleased and open his own business,

'you know in my mind I saw the western as a good place, just to move there because they are much freedoms and you can go and start whatever you want to do. I had a lot of ideas to do, about electronics. I thought if I moved there [UK] I can start to do my business in electronics'.

Farzin is a highly educated man with a BSc in Agriculture and qualifications in Physics and Maths. He claimed asylum in the UK in 2000 because he was under investigation from the intelligence police due to his opinions on Iranian society.

'I was [also] personal tutor for a students in university [for] physics and mathematics but also we talk everything about the freedom and things. [When] the demonstration for the newspaper [began] everybody was in the street about that, lots of people, [but] when the pressure group attacked the students everybody go home, some of them arrested, some of then run away. From that time I was being pointed by the intelligence service. From 1998 I was being looked, they are looking at me and my family [...] they came to my father house to look for me, to arrest me, but I was in somewhere different place. But yeah they write a letter to say I have to go to police, to introduce myself to them or something like that. That's a reason I start of the coming out from Iran'.

He portrayed the UK as a high class society where he could be free to live his everyday life in accordance with his own values and ideas:

'My imagination is like this [...] when I was thinking before coming UK, I was thinking I'm coming from one of the worst living to the very high class, to like a heaven [...] I was thinking I'm going there and life there it's gonna be good and I don't have any hassle'.

Souri was an administrative assistant in her late thirties when she applied for asylum in 2000 because she was becoming increasingly afraid of living her everyday life in Iran. She moved to the UK because she could no longer to live within a society which made her feel unsafe and her family already lived in London:

'The atmosphere in Iran [...] was getting worse and worse. Everything was bad I don't know how to explain...the economy, women (gestures covering), everything covered, and about the laws. In Iran, especially about the women, when you divorce you cannot keep the children with yourself, there is nothing from the government to divorce women, nothing, no home, no money, nothing. The children should stay with the man, with dad, you know there is nothing for women in Iran. There's also very bad, when you walking in the street or you went a shopping - all the time you are not feel safe - you are not comfortable [...] All the time I had depression in Iran, I wasn't good in Iran. When they my family came to here I was very happy to come to here after them'.

What became apparent within the stories of these individuals, particularly the men, was that the UK failed to live up to their imagined expectations and for some their western dream became a western nightmare as they temporarily became disconnected from their sense of self, through a loss of belonging.

A Loss of Self

In an earlier chapter I asked the question what happens when you move away from everything that you believe defines who you are? Such as your job, family, friends, home, and even the banal everyday things like the weather, the smells and sounds of your surroundings. Regardless of whether migrants are forced from their homeland or choose to leave their homeland, they experience a sense of dislocation of the self, arising from a loss of belonging

(Stock, 2010; Gilroy, 1993). Iranians arriving within the first wave had moved away from a westernised Iran and therefore upon arrival there was not such an element of culture shock nor a loss of self. They came with the primary aim to study and then return. It was only after they realised that they would not be returning to Iran that they felt the need to sustain their culture, traditions and rituals. Through their businesses a community of like-minded individuals began to form allowing them to live in the UK on their own terms and perform their Iranian cultural identity. However, Iranians who have moved to the UK throughout the third wave come from the 'closed doors of Iran' (Kamran, 2012), they have come from an Islamic society which heavily criticises the West and their way of life. Whilst the third wave may have idolised life in the West, they had no experience of its culture, society or its way of life, therefore upon entering the UK they often experienced an element of culture shock and a dislocation from their sense of self. Saeed explains this in his life story,

'We stayed in London for about four weeks, then they transfer us to Sunderland. They send us in the coach and still I didn't feel anything sad, I had a good feeling and I thought to build up a new life here [...] In Sunderland it was very cold, very different to my country, London was better climate for us. It was dark when I got there and everything is strange, 7pm and nothing in the street and I saw some racist people attacking the hotel I [was] staying in and then running away. I was scared. I couldn't understand the accents. I knew a bit of English but the accents were different and few times they shouting the f word to them foreign people. The police and people in hotel looking after us but it was not a very warm welcome to me. It was this things that stopped me and I started staying at home. They send me three weeks later to a house in Newcastle with some other Iranian people. I never go outside because I was scared. The neighbourhood where we living I could see some naughty young teenager, because of my language right, I scared of them, then I stayed at home. I didn't know anything about depression but when I talked to my GP and a friend, he told me I getting depression. They tried to push me out to college and things like that but I didn't like them and at the same time I miss my family'.

For Saeed, his experience of arriving in Sunderland can be perceived as the revealing of his split self as he is positioned as the 'other' by the 'racist people' in the street, the different accents and the strange, unfamiliar environment. This can be understood by Lacan's notion of the 'Imaginary' and the 'Post-Colonial Gaze' discussed in chapter three. The Post-Colonial Gaze refers to the positioning of the colonial as 'other' in order to reinforce the colonisers superior identity. The mirror stage of the 'Imaginary' refers to the conflict between a person's self-image and the differing image which is mirrored back to them by society. With regards to Saeed, British society mirrors back to him the image of the other, which is at odds with his own self-image and his imaginings of Western/British society causing him to experience the unhomely feeling of becoming disconnected from his sense of self. This disconnection arises from a loss of belonging, he no longer physically belongs to Iran and by being positioned as 'other' in the early stages of his arrival in the UK he feels like a stranger with no sense of belonging to the UK either. Due to claiming asylum he was not permitted to work, and being alone without his wife and child, Saeed experienced a loss of self which made his adaption to Newcastle society extremely difficult.

Another third wave Iranian who experienced a dislocation from their sense of self upon arriving into the UK was Kaveh. He described his situation as going from being a brain surgeon to a window cleaner. 'You do the window cleaning job for money, for life but it's horrible, you sometimes you just thinking it's not right, it's not fair you know?' (Kaveh, 2012). Kaveh, is a qualified civil engineer who owned a construction company in Iran, multiple properties, a beautiful home and a good car, but he lost all of this when he escaped to the UK in 2000 after he became labelled anti-government for standing up to a member of the plain clothed religious police, the *Basij*. Once he discovered he was being investigated by the intelligence police he made a quick decision to leave everything behind and bring his young family to the West with only one suitcase. Below he talks about the process of asylum and how his inability to work made him feel:

'When I just came here I just to start again from the nothing, zero, absolute zero and it's very hard. Especially when you had good life in Iran, it's very hard

to just come living in this flat, you know because I compare all the time. I haven't got the driving license in here, I haven't got the car in here, home is horrible, no contact with people, no able to do anything, no money, no, no, no, no, no, no and that's why my wife can't accept it you know. In Iran you just going to the best boutique, best shop, best quality of the anything: food, clothes, everything and now we just accept living in this situation! And that's why my family problems is a start [...] I haven't got any friend in here, I haven't any family in here, they don't accept my degree, I can't speak English, I'm not allowed to go job, I have no insurance number, and I just stay at home like a useless people on the vouchers. That's life? That's my life? And my wife is collapse in her mind because I lose all my life. I just wish I could give you picture of my previous life, and the start in England life. Its sooo different you know! Its, you can't imagine you're just thinking about the life you had and how in quick situation all changed. I told you about the 40 people working for me? and now I have to go in the post office and stay in queue for dole money?! It's horrible! It's very hard, very, very hard. And nobody haven't got any idea about your excuse, your abilities, [or] what you doing, because you can't communication with people, you can't found the friend. You know? You got a problem for everything. If you want to go to the GP, if you sick you have to ask somebody come with you, explain for GP. If you want to go shopping you got problem, people just watch you – you are foreigner, everything, every single things is very hard. Very difficult to accept'.

In Iran, Kaveh was a wealthy, highly qualified engineer who had fought for his country in the Iran/Iraq war, managed and owned a construction company with a staff of forty people and was happily married with a young son. All of which played an important role in his sense of identity. One encounter with a member of the plain clothed police in Iran changed his life trajectory and within months Kaveh was paying thousands of pounds to escape his country. Upon moving to the UK he arrives with his young family and one suitcase to claim asylum. Here he encounters a dramatic decline in status as he is forced to live off vouchers in a high

rise council flat on the outskirts of Newcastle city centre. He can't work, he can't speak English very well, he doesn't know anybody here and he has no money. In the end this dramatic change proved too much for his wife and she ended up leaving, taking their son with her. Everything that defined Kaveh as an individual was gone and this caused him to suffer a crisis of identity, to feel like a 'useless people' who has to 'start from zero' as is expressed in his narrative above. He found it very hard to come to terms with this different life, therefore the process of renegotiating his identity was extremely difficult and it wasn't until he met some Iranians that he was able to begin to adapt to his new situation. Re-connecting to his 'roots' aided him in creating 'routes' into Newcastle society:

'I'm lucky, I'm really lucky because after few weeks I meets some Iranian to just adopt to the new situation. I came introduce to Farzin, Parviz, Saman and the Maktab as well. I found some people to just help me to come back to the normal life [...] I think that's the most suffering for the immigrant from another country, they just feeling alone. They haven't got anybody talk to. The English people can't understand, but the people from my country they understand what I said. Especially when we can't explain to another language. I'm lucky because I haven't got a lot of friends but the few is really good, really good. They just help me; they help to improve my English. When first I came here I need some information about how can I register my GP? How to apply for the national insurance, apply for the professional driving license, citizenship... everything. Because I have no idea! And my English is not good enough to just found the information from the information centre or the internet, and that's why these friends just help me, direct me, give me advice'.

Locating the Iranian Community

Of the Iranians I interviewed from the third wave of migration, almost all came to reside in the area of Newcastle or Gateshead through the process of asylum. Having first arrived in London or Dover, within a few weeks of their arrival they were then relocated and placed in council housing for the duration of their asylum application.

'In 2000 we came here, and they gave us a house in Bensham Gateshead, and they gave us some interpreter to show us around and they just showed us the doctor and give us information on Iranian things' *Farzin, 2012.*

Upon arriving in Newcastle they were encouraged to enrol onto an English language course at either Newcastle or Gateshead college and were sign posted to places like the Iranian centre on Westgate Road and the Islamic centre *Hoseiniyeh*. However, it was through their own investigations of the city that they were able to locate the Iranian community and this was mainly through the Takeaway Trade. Although many of these Iranian men were claiming asylum, regardless of whether they had permission to work or not, they desired employment immediately. Throughout their biographical interviews it was clear that their successes and life in Iran were dominated by their ability to work, make money and provide for their family; stressing the long hours they used to work, sometimes in various employments simultaneously in order to do this. All of the men who I interviewed from the third wave stated that they had come to the UK with the intention of finding work and supporting themselves. They did not want to be living off the UK government or benefits and disliked the process of asylum for this reason. This contradicts current government and media portrayals of migrants coming over to the UK to play the system and live off the tax payer (Telegraph, 2014; Daily Mail, 2015). The government's current position actually makes life for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers unduly uncomfortable and actually undermines wider initiatives aimed at promoting integration by breeding deprivation, division and jingoism.

My research shows the first wave of Iranians who arrived in the 1970s played a large role in supporting this particular branch of third wave of Iranian migrants in their re-settlement. The most obvious support stems from the fact that an Iranian community was already forming with various establishments in place to provide their religious and cultural necessities, as well as information centres catering towards aiding new arrivals. However, it also became apparent through the various members' life stories that the first wave literally took members of the newer waves 'under their wing' and attempted to guide them through their resettlement by providing advice from their own experiences, giving them jobs or signposting them to people

or places who can assist them. For example, Parviz arrived in the North East in 2000 after leaving Iran due to its declining economy and whilst looking for employment he visited an Iranian restaurant in Newcastle city centre. At the time there were no positions available but the Iranian owner gave him the number of an Iranian friend who owned a takeaway business in Gateshead and told him to apply there. Parviz was subsequently given a job at this takeaway shop and within a few years became business partners with the owner, a first wave Iranian migrant. Together they went on to establish two more takeaway shops in Newcastle and South Tyneside. Therefore, accessing the Iranian community provided Parviz with a sense of belonging in the UK, giving him an arena in which to renegotiate his Iranian cultural identity whilst making routes into British/Newcastle society.

Other advice given to the 'accepted' members of the third wave included tips on opening up your own businesses, mortgages, banks and lending, the law and loopholes in the asylum process as well as, family advice such as schools and the UK education system. This finding was extremely interesting to me because it was juxtaposed against their refusal to help certain 'other' Iranians described as the 'riff raff'⁸. These individuals appear to fall under the second category of third wave migrants outlined by Hakimzadeh (2006), those described as working class labour migrants and economic migrants, sometimes with lower education levels and fewer transferable skills. As McAuliffe (2007) found in his work on second generation Iranian Bah'ai's and Muslims, local class relations were often 'reproduced differences' inherited from the homeland. The first cohort to enter the diaspora often sought to distinguish itself from later flows 'through an appeal both explicit and implicit, to the pre-Revolutionary class differences that existed in Iran' (McAuliffe, 2008:67). Initially I perceived this intergenerational conflict as a reproduction of class lines, however, within my research it became clear that the intergenerational tensions within the Newcastle Iranian diaspora ran deeper than that. After some investigation it became apparent that the tensions were actually a product of growing up under two different, conflicting political cultures which caused tensions between images/reimaginings of Iran as home, and what it means to be an Iranian living outside of Iran.

⁸ I would like to make it clear that I did not interview anyone labelled as the 'riff raff' or 'Khomeini's kids' within the third wave of Iranian migrants. The information I was given about these Iranians was told to me through the life stories of those from the first wave of Iranian migrants.

Political Culture and the Fragmentation of the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle

Intergenerational or internal conflict is not uncommon within diaspora studies, Khachig Toloyan has discussed a similar tension around authenticity within an Armenian diaspora and Pnina Werbner has outlined internal conflicts within South Asian diasporas in Manchester due to conflicting nationalities, religions and regions. However, she found that internal conflicts could be 'forgotten' albeit temporarily, when rallying to support the homeland e.g. raising money and awareness of Pakistan after the 2010 floods which devastated parts of the country. Such a public identity does not exist for the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne. Furthermore, as stated in the chapter two Reza Gholami (2015) identified internal tensions over 'Iranian' authenticity within an Iranian diaspora in London. This tension exists between those who inherently oppose Islam as a marker of Iranian identity and those who wish to continue practising and living as an Islamic Iranian in the UK.

Khomeini's Kids

Brah (1996) notes that all diasporas are differentiated heterogeneous contested spaces, even if they are constructed as a common 'we'. She argues that we need to be attentive to the nature and type of processes through which the collective *we* is constituted, as it is normally in *other* to something else. In this case it becomes important to look at the social divisions negotiated in the construction of the *we*, and the relationship between the *we* and the others. Throughout my fieldwork it became apparent in their discussion of third wave Iranian migrants, that the first wave Iranians in Newcastle had originally conceived the Iranian community as a cohesive and homogenous entity. One that was made up of people with similar experiences in migration, education, business, socio-economic status and family life. As we seen in Kamran's description of the community earlier in this chapter, the *we* of the community were 'very close' and 'used to be behind each other' because they 'shared the same feeling'. This was until the 'New Generation' of Iranian migrants began moving to Newcastle from the year 2000 onwards:

'Until the new generation of the Iranian started exporting themselves from Iran and coming here. When the Iranian government settled down and then slowly people were running away from ..you know... this and that. So they got into the England and they wanted to get into this community that we created. The new generation of the Iranian came in and they tried to get into this society we created but the[ir] mentality is completely different. [At Nowruz, Iranian New Year] We go in with our families; we wanna have a good family gathering so the kids, our kids meet each other. They come in; they want to get drunk because they came out of Iran, from those closed doors. Suddenly they got this free[dom and] they want to get drunk, they want to flirt with my daughter, with my friend's daughter, we cannot have that so the fight created. ...we created the old society, then let the new generation to come in, but the new generation didn't respect the rules... respect that's the right word' – *Kamran, First Wave Iranian 2012* (my emphasis added).

Throughout the process of my fieldwork I kept hearing reference to these allusive 'other' Iranians, the 'new ones' or the 'riff raff' who have managed to export themselves from Iran. Azad used the following analogy to describe these 'other' Iranians.

'We making the food to eat, everything is nice to eat... then we spill too much salt. We cannot take the salt out, we can't do nothing'. (These other Iranians are the salt) - *Azad, First Wave Iranian 2012*.

They were also commonly referred to as 'running away' from the regime, 'liars' and 'con artists'. At first it appeared that this tension between the waves of Iranian migrants was (as McAuliffe 2007 observed) related to their socio-economic status, especially when the third wave's education was often called into question.

'You see the new ones really they are the reject of the country or they runaway. We came for a purpose to study and go back. Unfortunately, there was a revolution and we didn't go back but the new ones come in, you know, they're

runaways. The new generation is totally changed, you know, all the old ones are totally different with the new ones' – *Amin, First Wave Iranian 2012.*

However, it was when Iranians from the first wave began discussing the 'mentality' of the newer wave and how they could not connect with their 'mentality', that I began to question whether there was something else underlying the tensions. It was not until I interviewed first wave Iranian Azad, that I realised the issues were actually related to the differing hegemonic political culture that they had grown up under. The notion of political culture relates back to the ways in which the diaspora in Newcastle was formed in connection with their ideas of Iran as home; a nostalgic imagined representation of pre-Islamic Iran. An Iran which existed under both of the Shah Pahlavi's and which glorified the notions of Persian culture, ancient Persian civilisation and Persian history, at the exclusion of Islam. As stated in the introductory chapter, both of the Shah's promoted a brand of nationalism which denounced the influence of Islam on Iranian identity and blamed it for the loss of a pure Persian culture. Under the political culture of the two Shahs, the first wave Iranians described Iranian society as respectful to one another, and as having a sense of community where neighbours looked out for each other. However, under the Islamic Republic this respect and sense of community between people has gone, and Iran has been replaced with a society of individuals.

'Our generation have respect to each other. There are maybe one or two odd people fallen out. 99 percent just very respect when we talk to each other. They are like a rogue, we can't talk to them, this we calling Khomeini kids. That's the system and Khomeini brought them up. They are drug addict, liar, con - most of them is like this. We can't mix with this kind of people' *Azad, First Wave Iranian 2012.*

Whilst Reza Shah Pahlavi attempted to steer Iran and Iranian identity away from Islam, upon its foundation, the Islamic republic attempted to remove all influence of the Pahlavi dynasty and the ideology their reign was founded on in a bid to revert Iran, Iranian national identity and culture back to Islamic times. As discussed in the introductory chapter this was achieved through absolute arbitrary rule, whereby the Islamic regime attempted to control every aspect

of society; both the public sphere and even the most private of spheres. Life under the Islamic regime was tough, especially throughout the Iran/Iraq war and in the introduction I discussed some of the larger impacts of Islamic rule such as, the re-establishing of the veil for women and the closure of Universities, however even the most banal everyday things became controlled by the government. For example, men and women could not be seen together alone in public unless they were married or family; it became illegal for music to be played in public and female singers were prohibited from making any music. Even parties inside your own home were banned. A female correspondent told me the following story:

'One of my friends in that time from high school, went to party Iran and it was mixed male and female party. They had a dance and music and something like that and the basij take them to the prison. She had a criminal record and they punished herself in bad way, when I saw her all of her back was injured. They had whipped her and she was just lying on the sitee, from this area (indicates from top of back to lower back) it was just injury. She couldn't wear a t-shirt and she had no cover on the side. Just a sheet on her back and her mother told me yes, she was in the party and basij took them into the jail and punished her in that way' – *Nadia, Third Wave Iranian, 2012.*

This occurred at the onset of the Islamic regime, the correspondent went on to explain how it is different in Iranian society today:

'It was actually in that time which the people still didn't know which area is private and which area is not. After a while it was corrected and told the people no it is ok in the privacy, if the people don't make any hassle for others its allowed. They can have a party inside, but not with loud music or something like that, but at the moment you can have loud music, mix party female and male but you have to pay the money (rubs fingers)' - *Nadia, Third Wave Iranian, 2012.*

When their attempts to go about their daily lives is hindered by the controlling nature of the regime, and non-uniformed civilians policing society, Iranians were not sure who they could

trust, nor who was watching them. According to Iranians in Newcastle, this excessive control and fear of the Islamic regime made life extremely difficult in Iran and this created a society of liars and manipulators because Iranians had to learn how to lead double lives. Lying became a form of protection. This is supported in the narratives of the book *'City of Lies: Love, Sex, Death, and the Search for Truth in Tehran'* by Ramita Navai.

'In order to live in Tehran you have to lie. Morals don't come into it: Lying in Tehran is about survival. This need to dissimulate is surprisingly egalitarian – there are no class boundaries and there is no religious discrimination when it comes to the world of deceit. Some of the most pious, righteous Tehranis are the most gifted and cunning in the art of deception. We Tehranis are masters at manipulating the truth. Tiny children are instructed to deny daddy has any booze at home; teenagers passionately vow their virginity; shopkeepers allow customers to surreptitiously eat, drink and smoke in their back rooms during the fasting months. All of these lies breed new lies, mushrooming in every crack of society.

I am not saying that we Iranians are congenital liars. The lies are, above all, a consequence of surviving an oppressive regime, of being ruled by a government that believes it should be able to interfere in even the most intimate affairs of its citizens' (Navai, 2014: xi).

This distrust created a nation of individuals who only looked after themselves, and this was furthered by the declining Iranian economy which made living everyday life even more difficult. Such distrust and individualism worked in favour of the Islamic regime because if everyone is suspicious of each other and individualistic, then a revolution is less likely to occur.

The first wave Iranians explained how Iranians known as 'Khomeini's kids' were the type of people who would work for you in your shop, learn as much as they possibly could about the takeaway business then after a few months quit, open a shop next door and attempt to steal your customers. To the first wave Iranians this is disrespectful, but to Khomeini's kids this is their way of life. This is what Iranians from the first wave were referring to when discussing

the 'mentality' of the third wave Iranians. Iranians from the third wave living under the Islamic republic had a completely different life experience compared to those Iranians from the first wave. What it means to be an Iranian under the Islamic republic is completely different to what it meant to be an Iranian growing up under the Shah. The Shah created a national identity and culture based on pre-Islamic Iran and the ancient Persian civilisation, whereas Ayatollah Khomeini created a national identity and culture based on when Islam came to Iran. Therefore, notions of Iran as *home* were also different and it is this tension around authenticity, Iran as *home* and political culture which played out within the Newcastle diaspora.

Decentring the Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle

As discussed earlier, the first wave of Iranians arriving in Newcastle attempted to fix the diaspora as a cohesive, homogenous community based on a nostalgic representation of pre-Islamic Iran. It is a fetish which allows them to deny the loss of their homeland identity, culture and history in Newcastle in order to negotiate their Iranian cultural identity in a new space. This idea stems from post-colonial concepts of identity discussed in chapter three. Constructing the 'other' in a stereotypical way creates the fantasy of a coherent identity of the colonisers self, an identity that is always in control. However, identity is created through meaning and, according to Derrida (1981 as cited in Hall, 1992), individuals can never finally fix meaning, including the meaning of his or her identity because meaning is unstable. There will always be meanings over which we have no control that prevent our attempts to create a fixed and stable world. Thus, confrontation with the colonised causes the coloniser to see that this stereotype is an impossible object which is why it needs to be constantly repeated. Within the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle it is the presence of 'Khomeini's kids' from the third wave which has caused the 'authentic' identity (stereotype) of the diaspora (based on pre-Islamic Iran) to waiver, revealing its meaning as unstable. Khomeini's kids confront the stereotype of the diaspora which the first wave have created to keep the fetish (Pre-Islamic Iranian identity) stable and fixed in place, thus revealing that the first waves identity, and that of the diaspora is not whole, or complete. The members of the first wave constantly place 'Khomeini's kids' as outsiders or others, stereotyping them as the 'liars' and 'con artists' because this reinforces the

fantasy of a coherent authentic Iranian identity which distances them from the Islamic republic. This is what Freud and Lacan (see chapter three) outline as a fantasy of wholeness.

'Culture has a dual identity, rather like colonial discourse. On the one hand, it is homely, asserting its coherence and stability: it is made meaningful by those to whom it belongs. On the other hand, it is unhomely because it is always changing: it is always being made meaningful by others, those to whom it apparently does not belong. Because culture has this dual identity, it is never quite coherent and self-sufficient. Its narratives seem stable and confident, but they always get drawn into strange displaced relationships – with other cultures, or texts, or disciplines' (Huddart, 2006: 84-85).

As this quote above suggests, the diaspora was once homely and familiar for the first wave and accepted third wave because it was made meaningful by them. However, with the arrival of 'Khomeini's Kids' the diaspora became unhomely and uncanny because they confront the first waves Iranian cultural identity, revealing that their identity is not coherent and stable, nor is the identity of the diaspora. It is these tensions around authentic Iranian identity, political culture and understandings of Iran as home which I believe have led to the *fragmentation* of this once perceived 'cohesive' Iranian community into a variety of smaller social cliques, with differing loyalties and friendships. In the following quote Kamran explains how the first wave chose to distance themselves from Khomeini's kids:

'They did not respect the rules of, erm, respecting this society and they destroyed it, that's what it was [...] So we all decided the best way is not to go! Let them go! They took over the society we created and destroyed it' *Kaveh, First Wave Iranian 2012*' (my emphasis added).

'Khomeini's Kids' as the *other* Iranian demonstrate that identity is fluid, fragmented and decentred, something which is constantly renegotiated depending on the cultural worlds which surround us. There is no such thing as an authentic Iranian identity because what that means is constantly susceptible to change.

Concluding Remarks

The majority of this chapter has focussed on the ways in which Iranians from the first wave have tried to fix a coherent Iranian cultural identity in order to distance themselves from the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, what became apparent through their biographical interviews and my observations in the field is that these members of the diaspora are also aware of their cultural hybridity. Therefore, the purpose of the next chapter 'Hybridity and the Third Space' is to discuss how the Iranian diaspora mirrors Bhabha's notion of the 'third space', and is something created in-between difference. Furthermore, as stated above, due to the arrival of Khomeini's Kids making the diaspora become an unhomely place, the Iranian community in Newcastle fragmented into smaller social cliques. With this came new searches for a sense of belonging, and the need to anxiously repeat the stereotype in order to reaffirm the fetishisation of their re-imagined Iran as home, and this coincided with the arrival of the Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism to the region. Therefore, the next section will follow a fragment of the Iranian diaspora who are centred around their membership to the MTO Shahmaghsoudi. It will discuss how the MTO Shahmaghsoudi as an example of Bhabha's 'Third Space' provided an arena in which they could continue to connect to their idea of Iran as home, whilst creating a sense of home and belonging in the UK.

Chapter Six

HYBRIDITY AND THE THIRD SPACE: RE-NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN THE 'IN- BETWEENS'

Diaspora and Hybridity

Bhabha argues hybridisation exists no matter whether you keep on asserting the purity of your own doctrines (Bhabha, 1990). This Iranian diasporic community is not only a nostalgic representation of a pre-revolutionary Iran, or a reminder of their roots, it is also a representation of their routes, and where they are going in British society. It is a space where multiple cultures and identities intersect creating something new 'in-between' difference, a space of hybridity which Bhabha terms the 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994).

'All cultures are symbol-forming and subject-constituting interpellative practices' (Bhabha, 1990: 210)

and as a Bhabha goes on to explain the act of producing icons, symbols, myths and metaphors through which we live culture, have within them a self-alienating limit. 'No culture is full unto itself, no culture is plainly plentitudinous' (Bhabha, 1990:210) because there are other cultures which contradict its authority and because its own symbol forming activity, its own meaning-making always underscores the claim to an originary, holistic, organic identity. Imitating an original – the fact it can be stimulated, copied, transferred, transformed - means that the original is never finished or complete in itself. Cultures are only constituted in relation to that otherness internal to their own symbol forming activity which makes them decentred structures. Therefore, all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity which gives rise to something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.

'For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives which are inadequately understood through received wisdom' (Bhabha, 1990:211).

Hybridity is the third space which enables other positions to emerge and this Iranian diaspora is an example of the third space because as stated earlier, it was formed in the tensions 'between' their re-imaginings of Iran as home and their desire to create a home in Newcastle. This idea of hybridity can be seen in their discussions of resettlement below.

'We take the good from cultures but leave the bad'

Something which was frequently mentioned by those I interviewed was how Iranians were able to adapt to new cultures easily because 'they take the good from new cultures, but leave the bad' (Saman, 2012; Dara, 2012; Kaveh, 2012; Farhad, 2012). For example, once Kaveh met members of the Iranian community he was able to create routes into Newcastle society. Below he describes his adaption process and the aspects of Newcastle (Geordie) culture which he loves:

'I learned in all my life to just respect the people with the different culture, different belief, different idea [...] now I can't see if that's the Iranian culture, or that's the British culture. The structure of my mind is the mix of them both. And I enjoy it. If somebody said the English culture is rubbish I said no! Some of them is better than my culture, and some of my culture is better than the English culture and as a human I got a choice. [For example] In Iran if you just go and say hello to everybody or smile to everybody in the street, the people say.... 'what's wrong with him?' but in here [Newcastle] it's not necessary to know him. You just go to street, smile to people and say hi! It's good in this culture, I chose that one and I'm enjoy it and I'm proud of living here. One day when I go out, some friend in a flat I have no idea where they living, the first

time meeting them was in the lift. We just push the button and he said “hello, you alright? how you do?” “everything is ok” and he said “yeah the weather is great”, and we just talking, and when we get to the ground he said “see you later, take care, have a nice day, bye”. That’s fantastic and I’m really respect that one and I enjoy it’.

Geordie culture is known for being friendly, where striking up conversation with the person sitting next to you on public transport is an everyday occurrence. Kaveh liked this aspect of Newcastle’s culture and adopted it in his everyday life. However, what he didn’t want to adopt was the Geordie culture (and British culture) of ‘going to the pub’ and ‘consumption of alcohol’ as he felt this was a negative aspect of Newcastle culture. Nevertheless, he respects their differences on this matter. This respect and acceptance for different cultures is at the heart of theories on cosmopolitanism. People with cosmopolitanism attitudes and values are characterised by their recognition of others because of their value and integrity as human beings, quite independently of their national affiliations (Mall et al, 2008). It is also based on an ‘orientation, a willingness to engage with the other [...] an intellectual and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experience (Hannerz, 1996:103) which can be witnessed by Farzin’s experience below:

‘Everything was nice and beautiful and strange for me. I like to try and look at everything, test everything, to find out how people works here. How they dressing, how people living here. I went to nightclubs and casinos and everything was attractive to me. I’m not alcohol man [but] I did try at first, I didn’t like a beer at all, but I had a some wine and different things few times to have experience. It wasn’t bad but in the other side of my mind I was a religion man and after months I pick myself up and [decided] alcohol is not good for me because I am a religion man. I tried to adopt myself with the English culture, try to do exactly the same as they do. I was trying to find out how they eat, but I figured I can’t eat pork but most of them is pork and also tried to find out how they have relationship between the people, everything was good, I mean it was

strange and also for me as well I had a feeling I had to figure it out how, I tried to adopt myself with them, to live exactly the same as them because I want to be here' – *Farzin, 2012*.

Iranians link their ability to adapt easily to their 'rich Persian past'. I was repeatedly told different stories about the history of Iran which reaffirm Gilroy's description of the contemporary migratory experience and identity position which I outlined in chapter two. It also mirrors Homi Bhabha's own experiences as a Parsi. For example, Dara told me the following Persian Folklore dating back to the time of the Arab Invasion in 651AD, explaining that this is the reason why Iranians are able to adapt into new societies easily:

'Something I always believed..... it was a bunch of Persians and this [is] a story from [a] long time ago, [from when] they used to be Zoroastrians. When Islam came to Iran they used to kill lots of Persians. So many Persians, who were rich at the time left the country and [went to] India. At that time they called them Parsis in India. When they got to India the Maharaja at the time, the King in India told them they can't come to India as there is too many of them. A wise man, which we were at the time Zoroastrian, comes in and asks for a bucket of water and some ink. He told the Maharaja 'look how it [the ink] dissolves into the water, how has it been dissolved? Look you can't even see the ink anymore. We dissolve within you [your society] like that and you will never notice us. We will help your country to grow. The Maharaja then agreed to let them stay. We Iranians are like this, we adapt and add to society' – *Dara, First Wave Iranian Migrant 2012*.

The Parsis are an Indian minority with a world-wide population of approximately 160,000 and as described above by Dara, they migrated from Persia in the eighth century to avoid Muslim persecution. The Parsis have a hybrid identity, 'something marked by an uncanny ability to be at home anywhere' (Huddart, 2006). What is interesting about the members from the first wave is how they attempt to essentialise their Iranian cultural identity on the one hand, but discuss their history of hybridity and adaption on the other. This is what Bhabha refers to as

the dual nature of culture, migrants are always situated in relation to both an original culture and a new location, between metaphor and 'reality' (Bhabha, 1994).

Celebrating Tradition in a Third Space

I have also indicated towards this hybridity throughout some of the quotes and examples given within the previous sections of 'Diaspora and the search for Belonging', for example when 'Introducing Persia to Newcastle' and the celebration of Iranian New Year. Within those sections I highlighted quotes from Kamran, who said the Iranian community was created because 'we've all got a English wife, we've got the kids that they are half Iranian and half English and we want them to meet each other and at the same time we are in the business, we wanna talk to each other, this and that. So we created this small community'. This small community, the diaspora is a space where hybridity occurs, it is an example of Bhabhas third space because it is where British or Newcastle culture combines with Iranian culture, creating a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. The Iranian new year parties were an example of this new negotiation and meaning as it was an Iranian tradition reimagined and celebrated outside of Iran, within a British context. As mentioned earlier within the chapter over the years the parties were held in a variety of large nightclubs in Newcastle city centre but I particularly remember the ones held at *Mayfair*, one of Newcastle's biggest and most iconic nightclubs which had previously hosted the likes of U2, Queen, Led Zepplin, Pink Floyd, The Who and Kylie Minogue (The Chronicle, 2013).



Figure 5: Mayfair Nightclub in Newcastle upon Tyne. Retrieved from The Chronicle Newspaper



Figure 6: Mayfair Ballroom which hosted Nowruz, Iranian New Year Parties throughout the 1980s- late 1990's before its closure in 1999. Picture retrieved from Chronicle Newspaper online.

For the big Nowruz Party this Newcastle venue which usually hosted Western rock and roll or pop legends was temporarily transformed into a reimagined Iranian cultural space. Iranian singers from America were hired to perform classic Iranian songs and traditional Persian cuisine was served, transporting those in attendance back to a pre-Islamic Iran where public jubilation was encouraged, not punished (as it initially was after the 1979 revolution under the Islamic Republic of Iran).

However as stated previously, with the arrival of newer waves of Iranian migrants, specifically those known as 'Khomeini's Kids', the diaspora became an unhomely and uncanny space, leading to its fragmentation. As such, large scale gatherings like Iranian New Year parties no longer take place. Instead, the diaspora is perceived as separated into various small communities based on differing loyalties and friendship groups. In order to re-establish the stereotype of the diaspora which represents the fetishisation of their imagined idea of Iran as

home, new searches and spaces of a sense of belonging opened up. This coincides with the arrival of the Maktab Tarighat Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism to the region in the late 1990s. In the search for a sense of belonging its current members were drawn to its promotion of 'self-realisation' and 'personal fulfilment', as well as its Persian centrality. Furthermore, its maintenance of Persian culture, tradition and rituals tied in with, and reinforced their need to re-imagine pre-Islamic Iran as home on a global scale. This next section will focus on a fragment of the Iranian diaspora from the first wave and accepted third wave who are connected through their membership to the MTO. It will discuss how the MTO School of Islamic Sufism as a third space provides its members with a sense of belonging and allows multiple identities to intersect and play out.

Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism

Throughout the previous section 'Diaspora and the search for Belonging', I outlined that the Iranian diaspora was formed in a nostalgic representation of pre-Islamic Iran, and by this I meant it was, and still is, based on their understanding of Iran, Iranian culture and Iranian identity under the ideology of Persian nationalism. In the introduction I discussed how Persian nationalism was an ideology put forth by the Pahlavi dynasty linking their reign back to the founding of the Persian civilisation, focussing on a history of Iran which excludes the importance that Islam has played upon Iranian cultural identity. As outlined by Kantouzian (2009) whenever the state was identified with Islam and traditionalism, Iranian society identified itself with a re-invented modern concept of pre-Islamic Persia; and whenever the state assumed the latter identity, society looked to Islam and Shia traditions. The Iranian diaspora in Newcastle is a representation of this conflict, the current state of Iran identifies with Islam, whilst the diaspora identifies itself with a pre-Islamic Persian Identity. Gholami (2014) identifies a similar attitude within the London Iranian diaspora which he terms non-Islamiosity – 'a discourse, sensibility and mode of practice through which some London Iranians construct, experience and live diasporic identity, community and consciousness in a way that marginalises, excludes or eradicates (only) Islam' (2014:60). Conversely, although the Iranian

diaspora was originally founded on pre-Islamic re-imaginings of Iran as home, and have made significant steps to distance themselves from the Islamic republic and its doctrines of Islam, the fragment of the Newcastle diaspora which I have researched, demonstrate a *return* to Islam. However, it is a form of Shia Islam that completely distances itself from the doctrines of Islam practised in Iran, arguing that it teaches the reality of, or the heart of Islam (Spellman, 2004). Furthermore, it reinforces their re-imagined image of Iran as home through its references to Persian nationalism, and encourages the maintenance of Iranian culture, tradition and ritual. Like those living in the diaspora, the MTO Shahmaghsoudi is constructed in opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, thus providing a space which combines an Islamic identity which fits in with their Iranian cultural identity and Persian nationalism, rather than placing them in opposition. It is a third space in which the tensions between identity, belonging, culture and location intersect to form something new 'in-between' difference. The remainder of this chapter will demonstrate how it provides Iranians in the UK with a sense of belonging on a global and local scale, and how this aids them in the renegotiation of their cultural identity. The importance of the MTO Shahmaghsoudi was not something explicitly discussed in the members' biographical interviews, it was however, extremely prominent within my participant observations and the way in which they lived their everyday lives in accordance with its teachings.

The MTO Shahmaghsoudi as a Regional, National and Global Network

In a web search about the Maktab Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism I found several question threads asking about people's experience of the teachings and practices of this branch of Sufism and noticed it was predominantly described as a Persian nationalist Sufi group and cultural community who are Muslims. This was also prominent within my research, for example in a Nowruz Performance performed by members of the London MTO Centre, the final performance of the evening, which was a rendition of 'Sorude Shahanshahiye Iran' the Imperial National Anthem of Iran throughout 1933 -1979 in which the audience also joined in. This also ties in with findings by Spellman (2004) who outlines that the MTO Shahmaghsoudi 'has been specifically designed for Iranians living outside Iran [...] it is conducted in Persian

language and decorated in Iranian cultural forms' (142). She also infers it allows Iranians to maintain a spiritual connection to their homeland in spite of their physical absence. Like Spellman, I believe this MTO Shahmaghsoudi order aids Iranians through a connection to the homeland, more specifically I argue that it reinforces their re-imagined image of Iran as home, which in turn provides them with a sense of belonging.

The Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism is an international non-profit organisation with centres (*Khaneghahs*) stretching over five continents. According to its members it has over 500,000 students worldwide with its origins dating back 1400 years to the time of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) and Amir-al Mo'menin Ali (the first imam of the Shi'a). The founder of this Order, Hazrat Oveys Gharani is considered to be the 3rd Master of the Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi Sufi order after the Holy Prophet and Imam Ali, and he believed that the true way to God was through inward cognition; to recognise our true self in the depth of our being - in our heart (Angha, 1996). The teachings of Hazrat Oveys Gharani have been passed down through an unbroken succession of Sufi Masters, with the current Sufi Master (42nd) being Hazrat Salaheddin Ali Nader Shah Angha. Appointed in 1970 Nader Angha, along with the work of his father and grandfather, has merged the teachings of Sufism with aspects of science, and spread the word of Sufism across the globe (Angha, 2006). He perceives Sufism as a bridge between religions, or as the reality of religion; a discipline educating people in the science of exploring his/her own being to reveal the infinite knowledge within them, in knowing themselves they will come to know God (Angha, 1996). The aim of the Sufi Master, known as *Pir* (meaning light of the path) is to guide the seeker through this journey of self-knowledge and to help them overcome obstacles on their journey to enlightenment. Due to the limited word count of this thesis I will not be going into detail about the history, practices and organisation of the order. For more information on this please refer to Kathryn Spellman's notable work, *'Religion and Nation: Iranian Local and Transnational Networks in Britain'* where this has been covered extensively. The aim of this section is to show how this school of Sufism aids its members in the renegotiation of their cultural identity, and creating a sense of home and belonging in the UK through its support of Persian

Nationalism and its maintenance of Persian culture, ritual and tradition within a third space in-between Iran as home and Newcastle as home.

Khaneghahs: Belonging on a Global Scale

Khaneghah means 'house of the present time' and is a school for learning the path of Sufism.

The original headquarters for the MTO Shahmaghsoudi were located in Karaj, a town approximately twenty miles away from the capital city of Iran, Tehran. However, following the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 the headquarters were re-established in San Rafael, California. According to the Iranians I spoke to, the MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism could not stay in Iran because it did not follow in accordance with the Shiism implemented by the Islamic Regime. Furthermore, it had been the wish of the 41st Sufi Master - Hazrat Shah Maghsoud Sadegh – that his son and successor Hazrat Nader Angha should spread the word of Sufism across the globe. Spellman (2004) observed that since the Islamic Revolution there have been over 75 Khaneghahs opened worldwide. These Khaneghahs are connected on a global scale through sophisticated web pages available in four languages: English, Persian, German and French. However, this website is not only a site of information on the Order, its history, teachings and practices but also serves as a way of connecting Iranians to each other to a real or imagined community on a global scale. For example, every Sunday a live stream of Hazrat Pir's latest lesson/lecture is broadcast to thousands of Iranians sitting at home across the globe.

The Order also has a thriving industry of manufactured goods including jewellery, t-shirts, picture frames, calendars, wall hangings and commemorative memorabilia (Spellman, 2004). These serve as a way of creating a sense of belonging on a global scale; connecting Iranians from various backgrounds to like-minded Iranians all over the world. For example, in my fieldwork in Newcastle upon Tyne the presence of the MTO Shahmaghsoudi was visibly present in the private spheres of their homes, typically their sitting room, through a variety of manufactured goods including books, wall hangings and Jewellery displaying the Schools emblem.



Figure 7: Left: Books purchased from MTO Shahmagsoudi; Right: Ring worn by members of the MTO.



Figure 8: Top left: Decorative Mirror with MTO Shahmaghsoudi Symbol; Top right: Collection of commemorative coins typically presented to members at Nowruz; Middle left and right: Commemorative coin celebrating Hazrat Shah Maghsoud Sadegh Angha's 100th birthday anniversary; Bottom centre: A plaque denoting passages from the 4th Ghool in the Qur'an - 'O God Grant me Thy Blessing Sublime – written in Hazrat Shah Maghsoud Sadegh Angha's (41st Master) handwriting.

Their belonging to the Maktab could also be witnessed through a gold ring typically worn on their right ring finger (see figures above). Saman explained that the ring was only available for a specific period of time, approximately fifteen years ago and has not been available since.

However, there have been other collectible or commemorative pieces available over the years. Such items are typically expensive and only available for a short period of time. Once they are sold out they are not re-ordered. Many members like to purchase these collectibles and add them to their collection, often displaying them around their home or on their person. For example, Souri, recently purchased the most current commemorative coin dedicated to the centenary birthday of the 41st Master of the order Hazrat Shah Maghsoud. Instead of displaying it in her collection at home, she sent it to a jeweller in Iran to have it turned into a necklace so she can wear it on special occasions. Such collectibles, both personal and decorative, enforce their sense of belonging to this transnational community and aid them in feeling a sense of home and belonging in the UK.



Figure 9: Souri's Commemorative Coin turned into a Necklace

London Khaneghah: The Cultural Hub

Established throughout the 1980s, the London Khaneghah is the longest serving centre within the UK and unsurprisingly holds the largest membership. Many of the members here associate themselves with the Monarchy and identified themselves as supporters of the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Spellman, 2004). As it has been in place the longest, the London Khaneghah could be described as the cultural hub to which other Khaneghahs in the UK migrate to for important cultural and religious events, some of which will be discussed in the

following chapter. This Khaneghah also holds importance because it is one which their leader, Hazrat Pir, visits on a weekly basis to give spiritual lessons. Many Iranians from other Khaneghahs in the UK make a weekly or monthly trip to London on a Thursday to listen to their Master's teachings.

As the most prominent centre in the UK, the London Khaneghah is one of the most intricately decorated of all the Khaneghahs in the UK and provides a very powerful spiritual presence. Originally a church, the internal space of the building has been completely transformed with most of the materials and art used in the décor being imported to the UK from Iran. Iranians from the Newcastle Khaneghah particularly highlighted the beauty of the colourful glass used to create the stain glass windows and the quality material used for the furnishings and curtains. There is also an array of Persian carpets, crystal chandeliers and various ornaments, again all handcrafted in Iran and imported over. Most remarkable is the painting which decorates the giant dome in the centre of the room. Painted by an Iranian artist living in France, it is reminiscent of the style used by Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel. This is then juxtaposed by the décor of the rest of the ceiling which uses intricate colourful jewels and glass in mosaic styles typically found in mosques in Iran. It is almost as though the two art pieces form a bridge between the old (Church) and the new (Khaneghah), the British and the Iranian, forming a space in-between.

The members of the Newcastle Iranian diaspora explained that because there are so many Iranians living in the UK now (or outside of Iran), Hazrat Nader Angha believed it was important that their children had the opportunity to learn about Persian culture and their heritage whilst living in the UK (or host country). Therefore, the MTO Shahmaghsoudi Khaneghah in London also offers a variety of weekly activities which not only cater towards Iranian religious needs, but also to the maintenance of Persian culture, tradition and ritual. Aside from the weekly religious service where they receive a lesson/lecture in Sufism from their teacher; the Khaneghah also has a sizeable library hosting books imported from Iran on topics such as Persian poetry, Persian language, spirituality and philosophy. It also provides Arabic and Quran classes; Tamarkoz (Meditation) classes; Sufi poetry readings; Farsi

language classes; and traditional Persian Instrument lessons such as, *Santoor*, *Sitar*, *Shaypoor* and *Zarbe or Tonback*. Persian language courses take place in MTO College which caters to all key stages of the UK Education Curriculum. All of this serves as a connection to their idea of Iran as home, providing a space for multiple identities to intersect and enabling them to live as Islamic British Iranians in the UK.

Maintenance of Persian Culture, Tradition and Ritual in the UK

As discussed at various points in this thesis, one of the most important traditions and set of rituals in Iranian culture, and this Iranian diaspora are those surrounding Iranian New year, a 13-day celebration called Nowruz. Nowruz, meaning 'New Day' occurs on the first day of spring (March 20th/21st) at the exact time of the vernal or spring equinox. It includes a variety of rituals which take place before, during and after the first day of spring such as the preparation of the Haft Sin (seven S's), Khaneh Takooni (spring clean), Chaharshanbeh Suri (fire festival), Nowruz and Sizdeh Bedar (13th day); rituals which all centre on themes of cleansing, re-birth, and renewal. In this section I will use the information acquired from biographical interviews and the performance by the MTO School of Islamic Sufism to discuss why these rituals are reconstructed and renegotiated by the Iranians in the UK as they attempt to create a sense of home and belonging in Newcastle.

Throughout my fieldwork I was invited to attend numerous cultural events which were produced and performed by members of the MTO Shahmaghsoudi in London. One of the most prominent events I was invited to was a sell-out performance given by the children who attend the London Khaneghah. This performance was narrated in English, with the children performing a variety of traditional Persian dances, wearing the traditional Persian dress associated with the different regions of Iran. They also performed live music using a variety of traditional Persian instruments and all of the props were designed and created by the children and other members of the MTO London. This performance was particularly informative for this study because it explained the importance of this tradition by emphasising its history in Persian cultural folklore, and explored the meanings behind the tradition, as well as its rituals. Most significantly, it highlighted the ways in which the MTO enables their Islamic identity, Iranian/Persian cultural identity, and their connection to Iran as home based on Persian

nationalism to come together through the celebration of Nowruz. Throughout the performance I couldn't help being reminded of the nativity plays I used to perform in at school.



Figure 10: Nowruz Performance by MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism, London 2013

History of Nowruz

The celebration of Nowruz is extremely important to Iranians in this diaspora because it is what they describe as an authentic Persian tradition. A Persian tradition which existed long before Islam came to Iran in the Arab conquest 7th Century C.E, and a tradition which has continued to survive throughout the ages without losing its original meanings. Even when attempts have been made to remove or alter the celebration it has remained in place. For example, Saman explained that in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution influential clerics within the Islamic Republic tried to dampen the public enthusiasm for Nowruz. This was because it encouraged public jubilation and displayed nationalistic sentiments previously endorsed by the Monarchy of Iran, a connection to which they were trying to remove. However, 'Nowruz survived because it was so profoundly engrained within Iranian traditions, history and cultural memory that Iranian identity and Nowruz reinforce each other' (Encyclopaedia Iranica Online, 2009). Now it is being reconstructed within the diaspora as a

means of reinforcing their Iranian Identity within the UK, and connecting to their idea of Iran as home.

The Shahnameh (King of Kings)

Iranians within the diaspora told me that the origins and timelessness of the celebration can be found in the infamous epic poem: '*Shahnameh*', the 'Book of Kings' written by renowned Persian poet Ferdowsi in 1010 C.E. *Shahnameh* contains 62 stories of Persian lore and is made up of three cycles Pishdadiyan, the Keyaniyan and the Sasanian. The first cycle which begins with the dawn of man and the Pishdadiyan is pure mythology. The next cycle describes the Iranian Kingdom of Keyaniyan and the long story of a heroic age in which myth and legend combine to produce an ancient epic. It mixes history with legend and in the third cycle provides an historical account of the Sasanian monarchy, the last Persian Dynasty before the Arab conquest (Katouzian, 2010). The *Shahnameh* holds importance amongst Iranians because it is a literary representation of Iranian culture and is described as being definitive of Iranian ethno-cultural identity. Saman explained that *Shahnameh* is an important piece of work within their culture and language because Ferdowsi wrote it in reaction to the Arab conquest. Furthermore, he outlined how it was strictly written in Persian to preserve and purify the Persian language which had become increasingly infiltrated with the Arabic language. Again, there is this reference to pre-Islamic Iran and authentic Persian identity.

Shah Jamshid (Jam-e Jam)

The '*Shahnameh*' writes that Nowruz originated over 3000 years ago when the prehistoric King Jamshid ruled the Kingdom. Jamshid is one of the most well-known figures in Iranian cultural mythology and his story, as well as the origins of Nowruz, were explained in the London Khanehah's Nowruz performance.

The story goes:

'the devil had taken away from the people of the world all their blessings, to the point of which whatever they drank and ate would not satisfy their hunger, there was even no wind in the air for the plants to grow and the devil was attempting to wreck the world. Jam-e Jam, under the guidance of god returned

to the world and he went in the direction of the devil and his followers who were in the south. He stayed there for a while until he had fixed everything for the people of the world. After this, everything returned to a normal balance of life and their blessings returned; they had managed to escape from disaster. Jamshid the jam had come back into the world like the sun and his light shone bright over everywhere. Everyone was astonished that there were two suns and it was on this day that the trees became green and people said that this is a new day, a new day for anyone who wants a blessing to plant oats.

MTO Shahmaghsoudi Nowruz Performance 2011.

Nowruz is therefore a celebration of renewal, harvest and the coming of spring. A time when life starts again. For Iranians in the diaspora who are centred around the MTO Shahmaghsoudi this tradition is about reflecting upon their life, achievements and hardships and thinking about what they want to achieve in the coming year. A time for removing all the 'negative' things in their life and making a change for the better, an opportunity to reconstruct and renegotiate their Iranian cultural identity in a British context. In order to prepare for this tradition, they partake in various rituals before Nowruz arrives, rituals which hold significant meaning to their Iranian cultural identity within the diaspora, as it allows them to re-connect to their idea of Iran as home and the MTO Shahmaghsoudi further enables this connection by teaching them the 'true' meanings behind the rituals. These will be discussed in the following chapter.

Whilst the London Khaneghah can be understood as the cultural hub to which other Khaneghahs migrate to for Iranian cultural and religious events, their local Khaneghah serves as the main source of belonging and provides them with the opportunity to form a new cohesive community as will be discussed in the following section.

Regional: Establishing the Local Gateshead (Newcastle) Khaneghah
Saman explained that this School of Islamic Sufism came to the North East region of Gateshead around 1996/7, starting in the home of a member. This is similar to the findings of Spellman (2004) who observed that the onset of the order in London in the 1980s was

organised by several affluent Iranian families, and held in one of their homes. This member (in Gateshead) had practised Sufism in Iran before moving to the North East of England in the years before the Islamic Revolution. In the late 1990s he was in discussion with the already established Sufi branch in London in which he was told that if he was able to get a gathering of people who were interested in Sufism, a teacher would come up from London to meet with them. After holding a few sessions in his home it was decided that the group would instead travel to the London Khaneghah every Thursday evening to attend a Lesson there. Each week they would hire a people carrier or mini bus and take turns to drive the five hundred mile round trip to London and back. This continued for a few years until Hazrat Pir, the leader of the MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism suggested that there were enough dedicated students in Newcastle to establish a branch in the North East, thus connecting them to the Global MTO network. Initially these sessions started in a library in Low Fell, Gateshead until premises were purchased in Gateshead town centre in 2001.

A small group of around eight people see themselves as the founding members of this centre and it was those who sourced the permanent establishment in order to create a Khaneghah. The building purchased was previously a working men's social club, an extremely large building spread over three floors which remained under construction throughout the entire eleven years it was used by these students of Sufism. Saman explained that they purchased this building because they initially expected a large following or intake of people, plus the price was extremely cheap. Within its opening month it attracted over 500 people travelling from all over the north east and even parts of Scotland, however as time went on this number dwindled substantially. The current members of the Maktab believe this was due to their inability to adhere to the teachings of Sufism outlined above. Although the Khaneghah in London has an average weekly attendance of a few hundred, it claims to have over one thousand members. In her work Spellman (2004) outlines that those attending the order can be separated into the shoppers, the dilettantes and the devout. The shoppers are those who attend the meetings but who are not immersed in the teachings of the Master and frequent other Shia institutions. The dilettantes frequent the weekly meetings but lead busy professional and social lives and use the Order as a base, because of its familiar Persian

language and décor. The devout are those who adhere to the path of enlightenment and teachings of the Master throughout their everyday lives and this is usually rewarded by a position of responsibility within their Khaneghah. This is true of the Gateshead branch as well, however according to the members I interviewed, as there is only a small following at Gateshead those who do not become immersed in the teachings and practices of Sufism usually feel guilty and end up leaving. For these reasons, by 2012 the number of those attending the Khaneghah on a weekly basis was approximately 25-30 people, therefore they decided to move to a more suitable, smaller and manageable premises in Birtley, Gateshead.

The majority of the members of the Newcastle Khaneghah were not practising Muslims before joining the Order, due to their need to distance themselves from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nonetheless several of the members of the diaspora who I interviewed could be described as devout members of the MTO Shahmaghsoudi because they have played an integral role in the creation of the Gateshead branch and continue to play a role in its maintenance. Not only were they responsible for sourcing the location of the premises but they also oversaw most of the renovation, decoration and furnishing of the Khaneghah; with the financial support of the MTO Order. All work completed on the building of the Khaneghah was done by this Iranian Sufi community, for example those with trades and skills in plastering, electrics, plumbing, carpentry and decorating worked on the renovation. Those who owned their own businesses or worked in management contributed by managing finances or project managing, whilst others helped out when they could by performing manual labour e.g. helping to paint, clear rubbish and general housework. Members from other Khaneghahs, particularly London also offered assistance and there were even members from a Khaneghah in France who travelled over to offer their artistic skills.

The members in the Newcastle/Gateshead Khaneghah meet for their weekly session on Mondays between 7 and 9pm but may also hold extra meetings to celebrate certain traditions e.g. Nowruz or other Islamic celebrations. The devout members also hold a position of responsibility within the running of the Khaneghah, which usually ties in with a certain skill set they possess. For example, those who can sing are given the responsibility of singing the

Zekr at the beginning and end of the session. This is an important meditation ritual within the practice of Sufism because you are leading the group in their remembrance of God. Other members are given the responsibility of reading from the Qur'an or leading a discussion/lesson about the work of previous Sufi Masters. Some members' responsibilities are related to their skills outside of the Khaneghah for example, those who work in finance or administration look after the Khaneghahs accounts and the library; those who work in the food industry are in charge of grocery shopping for celebrations; members renowned for their cooking skills make the food for the celebrations and those with good organisational and managerial skills are responsible for the overall organisation of the centre and liaising with other centres regionally, nationally and globally. These responsibilities and membership to the Sufi Order provide these members with a sense of belonging and gives them another arena in which to establish a cohesive community where they all support each other. This sense of belonging and sense of community is also enhanced by the ways in which the MTO Shahmaghsoudi promotes the maintenance of Persian Culture, Tradition and Ritual within the UK in order to remain connected to their re-imaginings of Iran as home and create a sense of belonging in the UK. This next section will discuss how the MTO connects Iranians to their idea of Iran through the traditional celebration of Nowruz, whilst the practice of the rituals will be discussed in the following chapter 'Living in the In-between: Re-imagining Iran as Home'.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout this chapter I have tried to demonstrate the ways in which the Iranians that I interviewed renegotiate their cultural identity within the interstices or in-betweens of culture, belonging and location. One of the ways this is demonstrated is through their membership to the MTO Shahmaghsoudi which mirrors Bhabha's notion of the third space, a space in which hybridity occurs, creating something new in-between difference. The MTO achieves this because it is a homely space in which multiple identities intersect, enabling the members to perform their Iranian cultural identity alongside their Islamic identity whilst living in the UK. As detailed in the previous chapter, these were previously in contention with each other, with the members of this diaspora positioning their Iranian cultural identity in opposition to the Islamic Republic, its version of Islam and the type of Iranians it produced. The MTO simultaneously

supports their Iranian cultural identity and an Islamic identity because it is a Persian nationalist Sufi group that also distances itself from the Islamic Republic and its doctrines of Islam, by aiming to teach its members the true teachings of Islam. Furthermore, it supports the members' reimaginings of Iran as home, thereby reinforcing the stereotype and the fetish that represents a nostalgic pre-revolutionary Iran based on Persian nationalism. This was evident through the Nowruz celebration where they performed the Shah's National Anthem, as well as the ways in which it supports the maintenance of Persian culture and tradition through its various activities. As a third space the MTO serves as a crossroad which connects their reimaginings of Iran as home and their need to create a home in Newcastle, as well as their Iranian cultural identity, and Islamic Identity. This provides Iranians with a sense of belonging, creating new spaces of negotiation and meaning which enables them to live as Islamic British Iranians within the UK.

Whilst this chapter has focused on how their cultural identity is renegotiated within the 'in-betweens' the aim of the next chapter is to focus on the ways in which this fragment of Iranians live within the in-betweens as they attempt to create a home away from home. The performance of their identity will be witnessed through the ways in which they re-imagine Iran as home through other cultural forms such as, hosting and hospitality, and Persian material culture. However, before this takes place the chapter will discuss their articulations of home and their experiences of living in the in-betweens.

Chapter Seven

LIVING IN THE 'IN-BETWEENS': RE-IMAGINING IRAN AS HOME AND THE PERFORMANCE OF IDENTITY

Narrating Home in a Third Space

Much like the concepts of diaspora and identity, discussions on the idea of 'home' show that it is an overloaded, convoluted, multi-layered and at times, contradictory term. In chapter three, I outlined how home can be perceived as a place, a space, a feeling, as practices, and/or as an active state of being in the world (Mallet, 2004) and this is because 'home' is a subjective experience. The word home evokes different ideas for each individual; the meaning of home depends on the experiences of the individual; and the ways in which home is practised is also characteristic to that individual. Therefore, it is the purpose of this section to reflect on this fragment of Iranians diverse narrations on their understanding of home, as well as the various ways in which their idea of home is re-imagined, reconstructed, practised and performed.

Articulating Home

Throughout our conversations in the biographical interviews I asked the interviewee's to talk about their experiences of *home*, including what the word *home* meant to them and where they called *home*. According to the respondents,

'Home. I think is home when you're happy. Home is where your heart is happy that's most important thing, that's a home' – *Dara 2012, First Wave Iranian Migrant*.

'I think the home is the place for relaxation and if you have got the family, there is place for the family to get together [...] When you haven't got the family relationship it is difficult to make home somewhere, you always just you feel like a guest, not a home' – *Nadia 2012, Third Wave Iranian Migrant*.

‘Home is where you feel comfortable. When I think of home, yes I think of my family in Iran – My mam, dad, brother and sisters but that’s all, I don’t think of Iran the country. My home is here in Newcastle ‘cause that’s where my life is – my children are here, and my business’ – *Saman 2012, First Wave Iranian Migrant.*

Like the literature on home suggests, many of the respondents see home as a comfortable, familiar, relaxing environment shared with family. However, in narrating their understandings of home it became evident that home for them, was a far more complex, multi-layered experience which included ties to multiple places and people, as well as conflicting feelings. As they narrated their experiences to me, the question which caused most discussion and conflict was in relation to where they called home. Their articulations demonstrate the complexity of home as a fluid concept, as they attempt to work through and make sense of their ambivalence. Many Iranians narrated feelings of being torn or confused about where home is, whilst others were comfortable with having multiple homes. What was prominent within all discussions was the notion of hybridity, the idea of living in-between. For some Iranians within the diaspora this hybridity was emphasised when it came to making decisions between Iran and UK, as demonstrated by Kamran below.

‘Now to be honest the question where is our home? Home for me is England, I was 15 years of age when I moved into this country, this country done more for me than anywhere else, okay? I know the rules and regulation in here better than I know back home in Iran. I was, I was born in Iran nationality I am some Iranian, some English. We don’t know, you know for example if there is a football game going on with Iran and England, personally I don’t know which one to support!? You know, I feel torn so we don’t, we are lost, we are lost in this a space, Iran is very, where we are born, where our ancestors were born but up to age of 15 I were there. After that I am 50 years of age now, 35 years gone and 35 years is most of my life and I spend it here. I have my family here,

I have my kids in here, yeah I still have a feeling about Iran but to be honest this is my home' – *Kamran 2012, First Wave Iranian Migrant*.

Other Iranians acknowledged this hybridity in their discussion of having two homes. Below, Farzin demonstrates the tensions between feeling at home and calling somewhere home, whilst Kaveh outlines his connections to two homes.

'The home means any place I can feel comfortable and [have] peace of mind and also have a family there, that's mean home for me. I think it must be all of them. If all of them together then that must be good home, but in here I haven't got my family 'cept one cousin and we see each other three times a week. The other thing, yeah *I feel at home* here. Like I travel all over the UK in the last few years and when I come back in near to Durham, or when I come around the Newcastle, I feel relaxed and *I feel* I'm at home. But also I feel if I have my family here, my parents here ya? Then I [could] *call here my home* but I feel I got two homes' – *Farzin 2012, Third Wave Iranian Migrant* (My emphasis added).

'Iran is home because I have lots of the memories there, I got a lots of friends there and my family, but here is my second home. Now if I just go somewhere else, like a two years ago I go to Spain and when I come back here, when I return in the airport I just think, 'oh here is my home' 'England is my home' you know? If I go somewhere else and I want to go home - I just think about the England. You know what I mean? I know my home town is always home but after that, here is my home and now I just feeling better' – *Kaveh 2012, Third Generation Iranian Migrant*.

For others there was clear ambivalence in the processes of thinking about where home is and the in-betweenness has caused them to feel lost. For example, one individual spoke of Iran as their home and where they felt *most* at home but as they went on to narrate their story, and make sense of their experiences, their perception of home changed leading them to describe neither Iran, nor the UK as their home.

'No Iran is always my home; I'm feeling it's my home. When I come back here [UK] it is just, I dunno, it is like just a place for relax or something like that?'

'My body does confused about it. I dunno if tis bad feeling because you can't express yourself to other people and you can't consider UK as a home, or Iran as a home it is like, sort of confusion' – *Nadia, Third Wave Iranian Migrant*.

This feeling of having no home or no sense of belonging was also echoed by an Iranian I met throughout my observations in the community:

'We Iranians in England we do not belong to the England and we no longer belong to Iran. We are stuck in the middle.' – *Jalol, First Wave Iranian Migrant*.

Iran as Uncanny

A common theme which emerged from discussions of home and belonging is the feeling of being a stranger, tourist or guest in Iran. Most of the Iranians I interviewed from the first wave and some from the 'accepted' third wave describe Iran as not being home because they no longer feel like they belong there. They maintain connections to Iran culturally and to their family who remain there, but described their visits to Iran as similar to that of a tourist or guest which often elicited feelings of being a stranger or in a strange place. This resonates with Freud's concept of the Uncanny discussed in chapter three. The uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar (Freud, 1919). Iran was once homely and familiar but now this familiarity has become something unhomely, alienating and strange. It is the same but not quite. In their visits to Iran they are not only confronted by the fact that the Iran they once knew no longer exists, but that they have also changed, thus making it unhomely, unknown and uncanny. These feelings are expressed by Dara, Kamran and Saman in the following excerpts:

'I think the UK is my home now yes definitely. [In Iran] you're a tourist. You don't know the areas, you don't know what everything is, you know it's just like what I said before, as a couple when they get married, if they are not learn together then they come apart and after a while they don't have much in

common. The same thing as when you grow up in another country and another custom. When you see your old friends they are not the same, because you totally talking about a different things. You are not laughing the same jokes anymore. You know for the first time you come here (UK) you watch Fawlt Towers you don't find it funny, but after a while you watch a few times and a few things you find funny. Then you go back to Iran and they have got this comedian, telling a joke and after a few years away you don't find it funny. You know, although you understand the language very well, I can write and read very well, my Persian is very good but you don't have the same aims as them, you don't think about the same things, your problem are not the same. So you don't feel at home, you feel you just tourist' – *Dara, First Wave Migrant, 2012.*

For Dara, Iran is uncanny because even though he understands the language, culturally he cannot connect to Iranian humour or jokes anymore because he no longer lives in that environment. Through hybridisation and his adaption to the UK his cultural identity has undergone renegotiation and that which was once familiar has become uncanny and alienating. It no longer fits in with his perception of home as a happy place.

In a conversation with Saman he explained that when visiting Iran, he no longer recognises parts of the Tehran he grew up in. It is the same place but it is also different. This mirrors Bhabha's notion of mimicry as sameness slips into otherness (1994). Saman spoke of how he is able to navigate some of the streets he recognises around his mother's home, but mainly relies on his family in order to get around Tehran when he visits. Relying on his family removes his agency and this conflicts with his independent sense of self. Therefore, it could be said he associates returning to Iran with a loss of self:

'Iran is strange to me now. I can't drive there; I don't know my way around anymore. I couldn't go back to Iran to live 'cause I'd be lost. I wouldn't know where to start. I know everything here as I've lived here over 30 years' –
Saman, First Wave Migrant, 2012.

Kamran also expresses the uncanniness he feels when visiting Iran in the following statement:

'I went home, I went to Iran but anytime we go back to Iran I don't feel like at home, I feel like a stranger myself Iran has changed, people has changed, you know the new generation of Iranians who they have been born in Iran - we cannot connect together. We have, as all people who lives outside of Iran, we have changed, we had to adapt to the English culture or, or who lives in America to the American culture, who lives in Germany to German culture. We had to adapt, otherwise you cannot live in the society, you know, so we have changed, they have changed, so that's why we cannot connect together. So when we go back home, I am lost. You know you go to the shop, you cannot communicate with the shop keeper the same way as a normal Iranian who lives in Iran they can communicate. It's not the language it's the connection, it's the, you know, it's the soul connection you make with the people, that's not there!' – *Kamran, First Wave Migrant, 2012.*

What is interesting about Kamran is that even though Iran doesn't feel like home to him anymore he still refers to it as home, displaying that home is an ambivalent notion with multiple meanings. His quote echoes the tensions which currently exist in the diaspora between older waves of Iranian migrants and the new wave of Iranian migrants known as Khomeini's Kids. Iran provides him with the feelings of the uncanny because he feels like he cannot connect with his fellow Iranians.

For some Iranians the very thought of visiting Iran arouses feelings of dread and fear. Sourì is a third wave migrant who left Iran because she was becoming increasingly afraid and unhappy with living in Iranian society. She only visits Iran in order to see her children and her sister, but she is always counting down the days until she returns to the UK.

'When I visit? For holiday. I'm not kidding, I don't like it. No, if my children and my sister were not in Iran, I never go back to Iran again, never, never. Even for my relations. You know even for aunty or uncle not for them. But if my children and my sister were not there I would never go back. Iran is not good, I think I'm like a prisoner like a person in the jail and I cant cant wait to come back again

to the UK. You know something? I'm counting down to come back to here in UK' – *Souri, Third Wave Migrant, 2012.*

The uncanny is close to what Freud calls *repetition compulsion* and refers to the way in which the mind repeats traumatic experiences in order to deal with them. Souri encountered a rather traumatic experience throughout her marriage in Iran, therefore her fear and dread of visiting Iran could be because it causes her to revisit that which she has previously tried to forget. Within the diaspora, Souri is able to connect to an idealised reimagined image of Iran which is not tainted by such memories. It is a homely space where she feels safe and free to be herself.

Home in Practice: 'Making a place as Iran for myself'

Regardless of their understandings of home or feelings of where they call home, all of these Iranians attempt to create a sense of home and belonging in the UK by maintaining a sentimental connection to their idea of Iran as home. In the previous chapter I argued that their idea of Iran as home is nostalgic representation of an Iran prior to the Islamic revolution, and their ideas of Iran as home are reconstructed in Newcastle through their attempts to remember, reconstruct and reimagine their Iranian culture and history in a new space. A third space created in the tensions between their re-imaginings of Iran as home and their actual home in Newcastle. This can be seen in the following explanation by Farzin:

'[On first moving to the UK] Everything interest me, I was trying [...] to find out how they have relationship between the people. Everything was good. I mean it was strange for me but I had a feeling I had to figure out how I try to adopt myself with them, to live exactly the same as them because I want to be here. That's in the start, in the first two- three years. After first two- three years I realise I miss somethings. I became attracted to anything from Iran. This attraction was more and more, and in like the last five years all my hobbies is everything Iranian. Anything where I'm going in the street I try to find anything Iranian. All my food is gunna be Iranian. All my movie is gunna be Iranian as

I've got a satellite receiver. I just watch all the Iranian movie, news and things. The only thing every morning when I wake up I watch the [UK] news because of the news and traffic and things in English, but the rest of them is Iranian. And all music is Iranian. I mean I'm living in here, but if I'm gunna make here as my home, coz I'm Iranian I try to make a place as Iran for myself.'

Like Farzin, many Iranians within this diaspora attempt to 'make a place as Iran' for themselves and from my research the main ways in which this is achieved is through: the maintenance of Persian traditions; the decoration of their Newcastle home with Persian artefacts and material culture; as well as the banal, everyday cultural rituals such as hosting and hospitality or cuisine. Using vignettes from my ethnographic research I will explore each of these areas below.

Reimagining Home through Persian Material Culture

One of the main ways in which Iranians reimagine Iran as home, and perform their Iranian cultural identity is through the decoration of their homes in Newcastle with items of Persian material culture. Parviz and his wife arrived in the UK as refugees over fifteen years ago with only a suitcase of belongings to their name. However, over the last decade they have collected a plethora of Persian items which are beautifully presented throughout their home in Gateshead, England. Collected on their trips to visit family in Iran (after gaining British Citizenship) or through their close friends on their trips to Iran, these items of material culture serve as a buffer to their Persian/Iranian cultural identity (see figures below), a way of connecting to their prior home of Iran, in order for them to create and negotiate routes forward within Newcastle society. As Tolia-Kelly (2010) argues, home possessions act as a 'trigger' which enable re-memory and narrated histories. They are 'souvenirs from the traversed landscapes of the journey, signifiers of narrations of the past (Tolia-Kelly, 2010:1). Studying South Asian women living in North London Tolia-Kelly (2004) found that possessions operate as material codes that symbolise the diasporic journey because they are connective markers to geographical areas of identification. 'Through their prismatic nature, "other" lives, lands and homes are made part of this one' (2004:323). Through her research she shows that lived

environments hold the triggers of *re-memory* as they symbolise narratives of social heritage. These visual and material cultures help situate diasporic groups politically and socially within structures of feeling that have evolved through their varied relationships with cultural identity. 'A sense of nation, belonging and citizenship are figured through these active materials in the home environment. Other textures of landscapes, narratives and social histories resonate through their presence' (Tolia-Kelly 2004:327). The refraction of connection to past places, stories and genealogies through material cultures collectively signify the absence of other people, places and environments. Similarly, in her study of material culture in the Jewish diaspora Hart (2008) found that objects such as paintings, books, décor and religious artefacts act as a connection to 'a long gone Israel....a visual tie to an ancient past' (Hart, 2008:8-9). She also argues that people keep and display objects which represent their Jewishness to show where they come from; their lineage and genealogy. These objects act as a reminder and also portray narrations of the individuals' past and aid them in renegotiating their identity in the present.

One of the first items I noticed upon entering Parviz's home is the metal picture depicting the reign of King Daryoush (Darius) from the Achaemenid Empire. It was positioned within the archway between their front door and the passage way, thus displaying a direct connection between their home in Newcastle and their pre-Islamic re-imaginings of Iran as home. Moving into their sitting room this theme continued where artefacts of all descriptions decorated their ceiling, walls and floor, each telling their own story and all relating to their Persian cultural identity. For example, in the figure below, photograph two denotes a picture which connects them to a story of the village from which they originated, whereas photograph three is a picture relating to the Qur'an about protection from the evil eye and their spiritual journey of Sufism. The verse translates to,

'Those who disbelieve would almost cause your death with their eyes when they hear this Qur'an and they say: He is insane! But this Qur'an is but a reminder to all the worlds' (Translated at www.al-islam.org).



Figure 11: Photograph 1: Metal picture frame depicting the reign of King Daryoush of the Achaemenid Empire; Photograph 2: Ancient picture of their home village in Iran; Photograph 3: Surah al-Qalam, chapter 68 verses 51-52 of the Holy Qur'an.

Through such objects we are able to see how they live in the in-betweens of culture, location and belonging, as they live as Islamic British Iranians in Newcastle. Protection from the evil eye was present in a few rituals I observed both within the Iranian community and Iran itself, as you will see later in a later section on celebrating Nowruz in Newcastle. According to Iranians I spoke to, this verse is about the negative energy of others and its ability to cause you harm. Kantouzian (2009) describes Iranians as a superstitious people and having this verse present in your home is believed to offer protection from the evil eye to those living inside.



Figure 13: Decorative Curtain made from woven carpet in Iran



Figure 12: Decorative handmade tissue box cover and table runner from Iran



Figure 14: Displaying a matching handmade mosaic tissue box and confectionary box. Also shows silver tea tray and Persian carpet all obtained from Iran

Amongst the objects which hold personal connections to an 'Imagined Iran' through history or religion, even banal items such as table runners, confectionary boxes or tissue box holders serve to remind them of prior homes in Iran (see figures above). One item which was particularly present in all Iranian homes in Newcastle and seems to hold particular importance was the infamous Persian Carpet.



Figure 15: A collage of the Persian Carpets displayed in Iranian homes in Newcastle upon Tyne.

'The Persian carpet is one of the greatest things to be created in Iran, all Iranians have them whether they live in Iran or not. It has become part of our culture and that's why I have one. They can be really difficult to get over here, I remember about 10 years ago I visited Iran and tried to bring one back and customs wouldn't let me bring it through, my wife was devastated' – *Saman*, 2012.

Such objects serve as buffers to their Persian cultural identity reminding them of where they came from. According to McCracken (1988) such objects act as a bridge between the real and the ideal home. Within this diaspora they act as a bridge between their re-imaginings of Iran as home and their desire to create a home in Newcastle, creating new home in-between difference. Through displaced meaning strategy a culture can remove its ideals and place them somewhere safe and out of harm's way into the past or future. Individuals discover a

personal golden age in which life conformed to their fondest expectation and through objects or goods they are able to entertain a connection that present circumstances now deny them. For Iranians in this fragment of the diaspora their personal golden age of Iran as home was prior to the Revolution in 1979. Remembering Iran through objects enables them to create a home away from home in a third space, providing them with a sense of belonging and the ability to make routes into UK society.

Remembering Home: Themes of Hosting and Hospitality

Another way in which Iranian culture is remembered and performed in Newcastle is through themes of hosting and hospitality. Something that was present in some of the sitting rooms of Iranian homes in Newcastle is a small table which always has cups, saucers, a bowl of nuts (usually pistachio nuts) and Iranian style biscuits underneath. This is something typically found in households in Iran for when guests come to visit. Hosting and hospitality is an extremely important trait to Iranians, and throughout my observations whilst visiting family in Iran I noticed how Iranians would go out of their way to make sure their guests are welcome and feel at home. This is known as the act of *Ta'arof*. Described as 'the great national trait of exaggerated politesse, modesty, and self-deprecation that Iranians seem to be born with' (Majd 2008, p. 65), *ta'arof* is a widespread ritual of verbal and non-verbal communication in which Iranian social actors perform mutual deference (Maghbouleh, 2012). It is generally a ritual conducted by women and throughout the entire time their guests are present the women would consistently go round making sure their guests had something to drink and that they were helping themselves to snacks. Even if you had just finished a huge meal, they would insist you have slices of cake or pieces of fruit. You would also be supplied with a constant flow of tea. For Iranians who have moved to the UK they initially found English rituals of hosting and hospitality strange. In the following quote Mehri explains the difference between the two:

'We put our hearts and soul in to it. When we invite somebody we have to give them the best, this is who we are. I would say that's part of our culture. You know this is something at first I couldn't understand when you go to English

family, all of them, at most they offer you a cup of coffee, that's all and that's it! You don't even get the second one. You know they are not stingy, it's just the way they are, this their ways. English women you know that have Iranian husbands, only they can understand how we have to provide for our guests [...] I'm not just saying English, maybe with other international cultures too you know? We [Iranians] do not go to anybody's kitchen. If they want to give us something, we just wait until they offer it. We do not stretch our hands even for a glass of water, we might come to someone's house and die from thirst and we would never ask'



Figure 16: Mehri's Home: Hosting Coffee Table

In the methodology I highlighted my lack of understanding of the Iranian cultural trait *ta'arof*. When visiting Iranians at their homes I was consistently overwhelmed by the generosity of my participants and often felt unsure of how to respond. They were already donating a significant amount of time by participating in an interview but as you can see from the figure above, they also went out of their way to make sure I had something to drink, that there were snacks available and some even insisted I join them for lunch or dinner depending on what time I was

at their home. Whilst on the one hand I did not want to be intrusive, such invitations allowed me to witness the ways in which Iranian culture and their everyday rituals are reconstructed in Newcastle as they create a home away from home.

In relation to themes of hosting and hospitality, another way in which Iran as home was reimagined in Newcastle was through the banality of furniture arrangement and the presentation of their finest glassware/China. Within Iran I noticed that some households have two sitting rooms, one for hosting guests and the other for everyday use. These rooms were usually only separated by an open archway but whilst the everyday sitting area was made for comfort, the one for guests generally had much more formal, expensive furniture and of course, the table which housed serving plates, confectionary and items for serving hot drinks (see figures below). It also had a cabinet which housed crystal, china and glassware.



Figure 17: A hosting sitting area in a household in Tehran.



Figure 18: Glass cabinet of Crystal, China and Glassware in Iran.

This presentation of furniture was also visible in some of the Iranian households in Newcastle as can be seen in Nadia's home below.



Figure 19: Nadia's home: Hosting sitting area situated right next to an everyday sitting area, Newcastle upon Tyne



Figure 20: Nadia's home in Newcastle upon Tyne: Glass Cabinet displaying China, Crystal and Glassware.

Reimagining Iran as home in this way not only forms a connection to a prior home, but could also be construed as a symbol of 'status' and showing themselves at their best. I have already stated earlier within this thematic chapter that 'money' and 'status' were prominent themes within this research. Whilst for males this is expressed through their ability to work and make lots of money, for women their status is expressed through the decoration of their home. Within my life, from a very young age I remember my dad explicitly telling me that I must wear my best clothes and Iranian jewellery when going out to Iranian events such as Iranian New Year parties, birthday parties and weddings. It was extremely important for his family to look their best at such events as it demonstrated his ability to take care of us and provide for us.

By examining the banal, minutiae of everyday practices within this Iranian community I have attempted to show how rituals and ceremonies involved in family, employment, hosting and hospitality, clothing, and cooking, are employed as a means of connecting to their idea of home. Such rituals are thus intimately connected to notions of community, identity and belonging.

Reconstructing Home: Celebrating Tradition in the In-between

Nowruz

In this final section I will use information acquired from biographical interviews as well as, observer as participant observations in Iran, at member's homes, and performances by the MTO School of Islamic Sufism to discuss how the celebration of Nowruz and its rituals are reconstructed and renegotiated as Iranians attempt to create a sense of home and belonging in Newcastle.

Sofreh Haft Sin

The most prominent ritual reconstructed within the diaspora in Newcastle is that of the haft sin. This stems from the 'the planting of oats' in the story of King Jamshid (outlined in the previous chapter) and represents blessings which Iranians would like to take through into the new year. *Sofreh* means table cloth, *Haft* is Persian for the number seven, and *sin* is Persian for the letter 'S', therefore translated into English it means the seven S's and it is usually presented on a nice piece of fabric or table cloth. Each item of the traditional seven items on the *haft sin* symbolises something different and carries the following meanings for Iranians 1) *Sabzeh*, is made by the individual Iranian creating their *haft sin*. It is wheat or lentils grown from seeds in a dish and it is placed on the *haft sin* when the seeds have started to shoot. It symbolises rebirth; 2) *Samanu*, is sweet pudding made from wheat and symbolises affluence. This is made by hand and it takes a lot of time and patience to create it. By taking the time to make it, Iranians hope this patience will be reflected into the coming new year; 3) *Sajid*, is dried fruit and symbolises love; 4) *Sir*, means garlic in Persian and symbolises medicine and good health; 5) *Sib*, is Persian for apple and this symbolises beauty; 6) *Serkeh*, means vinegar in Persian and this symbolises old age and patience; finally 7) *Somac*, is a flavouring put on Iranian food, its presence on the haft sin symbolises the colour of sunrise and represents their life being filled with light instead of darkness. Other items typically found on a haft sin today are: Sonbol, which is Persian for hyacinth and represents the coming of spring, a mirror which represents ultimate truth, a Goldfish in the bowl represents life and decorated eggs represent fertility.

The Haft Sin in Iran

Generally, the idea of the *Haft Sin* is to prepare the items yourself, however in the weeks leading up to the celebration Iran's street merchants and *bazars* (markets) make the most of the celebration by selling everything necessary for the *haft sin* and the rest of *Nowruz* rituals. Whilst in Iran I participated in this ritual by helping my uncle shop for the relevant items for the *haft sin* and then I helped my grandmother prepare it the day before *Nowruz*.



Figure 21: Shopping for Sabzeh in Iran 2012



Figure 22: Preparing the Haft Sin at my Grandparents' Home

The Haft Sin in Diaspora

Souri explained that her haft sin is important to her because it is 'part of her culture', and begins her preparations around three weeks before the day of Nowruz by growing her *sabzeh*. In Iran many choose to buy pre-grown *sabzeh* (as demonstrated in the pictures above) but the members of the MTO Shahmaghsoudi choose to make it themselves in order to be more authentic.



Figure 23: Decorated eggs represent fertility on the haft sin, London. Figure 24: Souri growing sabzeh for the Haft Sin.

According to the Iranian community in Newcastle 95% of households in Iran will create a *haft sin* at the time of Nowruz and likened it to the Christmas tree. The haft sin is typically found in a central position within the sitting room or the main room of an Iranian household. As you can see from these pictures and the explanations about the meaning behind this ritual, an intricate amount of care, time, thought and effort goes in to the preparation of the haft sin. Souri explained that the haft sin is as much about aesthetics as it is about the blessings. Every year she would spend time thinking about where she would place her haft sin, what colours she wanted to use for her ribbons, what glassware to present the blessings in as well as, what material she would place the haft sin on. In preparing the haft sin she hoped her blessings would be rewarded throughout the following year.



Figure 25: Souri's Haft Sin 2013, placed in the centre of her sitting room – Newcastle, UK.

Members of the Newcastle Sufi order claimed that those living in Iran did not necessarily know the true meanings behind the haft sin as Farzin explains:

'Most of the family there they don't know exactly why. They know they have to do it and follow it, they don't exact know the meaning of it'.

Farzin argues that people in Iran complete the haft sin simply because it is tradition, that they do not understand the meaning behind the actions and implied that this is because the government does not teach it. It was inferred that the Iranian government, and its doctrines of Islam do not understand the tradition and have tried to dampen its celebration in the past. Again there is this notion of authenticity, a prominent theme in diaspora research. The idea that Iranians within the diaspora are more authentic in their Nowruz celebrations than Iranians living within Iran. Throughout the biographical interviews and ethnographic observations various members of the Iranian diaspora would remind me about what the 'MTO' has written about the haft sin, or to remember the MTO's Nowruz performances. Stating that the MTO taught and explained to them the 'true teachings' of Islam as well as the meaning behind the offerings on the haft sin and what each represents. This thereby demonstrates the ways in

which the MTO encourages the maintenance of Persian culture, tradition and ritual within the UK.



Figure 26: Haft sin prepared by members of MTO Shahmaghsoudi in London 2013

For *Nowruz* 2013 I attempted to partake in the rituals surrounding the tradition even whilst I was not present in the Newcastle Iranian community but living in Keele, Staffordshire. With the guidance of my father and my step mother I acquired the relevant products for the *haft sin* whilst I was at home in Newcastle upon Tyne but prepared the ritual at my home in Keele. In an attempt to be as traditional as possible I opted to grow my own *sabzeh* from green lentils for which I received a step by step process from my step mother (see below).

I also purchased some nice glassware from Ikea to display the haft sin products as it is as much about ascetics and individuality, as it is the objects themselves. My participation in this ritual turned out to be a good discussion topic throughout the biographical interviews or a conversation starter whilst out in the field. Even though most of the Iranians were surprised to see I had taken part in the ritual it was received with compliments and praise. However, although I enjoyed participating in this ritual and it really made me think about everything I had achieved that year, as well as, all the hopes I had for 2013, there was an element within me which couldn't shake the idea that I was being fake, like the ritual didn't belong to me.



Figure 27: Day 1 Sabzeh Preparation - Place lentils in a container and cover with water; Day 4 Sabzeh Prep - Drain lentils and place in dampened cloth; My Sofreh Haft Sin.

Khaneh Takooni

Further to the haft sin, in order to prepare the home for Nowruz there is the spring cleaning ritual *Khaneh Takooni*. *Khaneh* means 'house' and *Takooni* means 'shaking' and stems from the shaking of Persian rugs to remove the dust. This ritual not only involves the cleaning of the entire household but also a cleansing of each room using *Esfand* seeds. This is something I witnessed both in Iran and within the diaspora. *Esfand* is believed to protect you from the 'Evil Eye' and was compared to other cultural superstitious actions such as 'touch wood' or 'throwing salt over your shoulder'. Souri explained that the 'Evil Eye' is about being the victim of a curse at someone else's will and as Nowruz is about the spirit of renewal, as well as blessings for the following year, *Esfand* is used to protect their home and the people

living there from the negativity of others. Such protection is also detailed in the Qu'ran as will be seen later when discussing participants' homes. As you can see from the figures below, the burning seeds produce smoke which must then be circled around each person's head, before being taken through each room in the home.



Figure 28: Burning Esfand seeds to protect from the 'evil eye' in Iran. Figure 29: Preparing Erfand seeds in Newcastle upon Tyne

Chaharshanbeh Suri

Although I did not witness this ritual throughout my fieldwork, the members I spoke to also discussed the importance of another cleansing ritual which takes place before the arrival of Nowruz known as *Chaharshanbeh Suri*. Whilst *Khaneh Takooni* cleanses the home, *Chaharshanbeh sori* is about cleansing oneself for the new year ahead. *Chaharshanbeh* means Wednesday and *Suri* means fire and on the last Wednesday of the year it is tradition to light small fires and jump over them. Kaveh explained the meaning behind this ritual:

'To make ourselves ready to come to the new year. People jump over the fire singing "*zardi-ye man az toh, sorkhi-ye toh az man*" [translated as all my illness for you and all your healthiness for me]. Fire is red and yellow. Red is symbol of health and yellow is illness, meaning they want the health and red from the fire and the illness is taken by the yellow of the fire'.

Nowruz

If the haft sin is likened to the ritual of the Christmas tree, then Nowruz is described as similar to Christmas day. The day of *Nowruz* in Iran is traditionally spent at the oldest living relatives

house, therefore usually at a grandparent's house. However, if the grandparents are too old to cook and cater for the entire family then another member of the family will host. We began the day of *Nowruz* at my grandparents' home where all my immediate family; aunts, uncles and cousins came to exchange gifts (usually fresh bank notes presented in the Quran or diary). At the exact time of the vernal equinox we all shook hands and kissed each other on the cheek saying 'Aide Shomar Mobarak', meaning 'Happy New Year'. After spending a few hours with my grandparents we travelled to my oldest aunt's house for a traditional *Nowruz* meal known as *Sabzeh Polo Marheed* which is fish in breadcrumbs (Salmon) served with rice, dill and broad beans. As a female, I was expected to (and I did so willingly) help set and later clear the table with my aunt's and female cousins.



Figure 30: Tradition Nowruz Meal - Sabzeh Polo Marheed

However, most Iranians who live within the Newcastle diaspora do not have many, if any of their Iranian relatives living within the UK. Furthermore, due to the fragmentation of the diaspora discussed in the previous chapter, there is no longer a dominant public space where Iranians celebrate Nowruz. In the past, Nowruz was a chance for Iranians to come together and publically celebrate their Iranian identity as it would usually take place within prominent nightclubs in Newcastle city centre. As mentioned within the previous chapter, Iranian singers from America would come over to perform classic Iranian songs and traditional Persian cuisine was served, transporting those in attendance back to a pre-Islamic Iran. It was an Iranian cultural tradition reimagined and reconstructed within a British context, a space which

combined British and Iranian culture. Nowadays, parties do take place, but like the diaspora these are now fragmented catering to certain pockets of the community, with some members refusing to attend such gatherings due to conflicts experienced in past celebrations.

The members I interviewed are an example of those who choose not to attend such celebrations anymore, instead, they return to tradition and treat their circle of friends from the MTO Shahmaghsoudi as their immediate family, as Kaveh explains:

‘Today’s friends we don’t know them from Iran, we just came in here, just sometimes by very random, or by accident we know each other ...and we found for example some similarity, some thinking like in the same track. We just found this and becoming like a family, exactly like a family, that’s why we don’t [feel] homesick, that’s how we survive to living in here’.

On Nowruz they take turns to host each other within the private sphere of their homes, for example for Nowruz 2013 I was invited to Parviz and his wife’s home for traditional Nowruz meal of Sabzeh Polo Marheed along with Farzin, Kaveh, Souri and Saman. They spent the day reminiscing on their Nowruz celebrations in Iran, telling each other stories and jokes, all the while teaching me the importance of the day and its rituals.

Whilst the day of Nowruz in diaspora is spent in the company of closest friends, the arrival of Nowruz is usually celebrated within the MTO School of Islamic Sufism. As I mentioned previously Nowruz begins at the exact time of the Vernal Equinox, therefore it is subject to change every year. However, regardless of the time at which it occurs the members meet at the Khaneghah in Gateshead to perform their Sufi rituals and to watch a live broadcast of Hazrat Pir on the MTO Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism’s website, providing a global, transnational connection to fellow Iranian Sufis all celebrating the arrival of Nowruz at exactly the same time.

Sizdeh Bedar

The final tradition and ritual surrounding Nowruz is *Sizdeh Bedar* which means the thirteenth day after *Nowruz* in Farsi. This is traditionally spent outdoors in a park or public environment as it is believed to be unlucky to stay inside.



Figure 31: Families celebrating by Milat Tower; Car carrying Sabzeh to show participation in the ritual of Sizdeh Bedar, Iran 2012.

This is a day where family and friends come together to have a picnic or barbeque and partake in outdoor activities such as Kite Sailing.

It is also traditional to take the *Sabzeh* from the *haft sin* and throw it in a river or stream as this represents life moving forward. As you can see from the picture below, in Iran people drive with their *Sabzeh* on the outside of their car to their chosen location. This is a way of demonstrating their participation in the ritual.



Figure 32: Families in Iran celebrating Sizdeh Bedar alongside the motorway, 2012

This day is generally extremely busy with thousands upon thousands of people descending upon public spaces. Any available greenery is used for picnics and barbeques including that

lining very busy motorways (see photo above). For this very reason my families didn't want to go out but after some begging and negotiation I managed to convince my father and uncle to take me and my five-year-old cousin out to fly her kite so I could observe the ritual taking place in Tehran.

For Sizdeh Bedar 2013 I was invited to join several members of the Newcastle Khaneghah for a picnic in Jesmond Dene Park in Newcastle. In the past (1990s) I remember this being a large event where many members/families of the Iranian diaspora would meet at a park in Hexham, Northumberland and hold Iranian style barbeques with various types of Kabob on offer. This is very similar to how it is celebrated in Iran. However, with the fragmentation of the diaspora the Sizdeh Bedar gatherings in Newcastle appear to be spent within specific friendship circles. For *Sizdeh Bedar* 2013 I was invited to join several members of the Newcastle upon Tyne MTO for a picnic in Jesmond Dene Park in Jesmond, an affluent suburb just north of Newcastle City Centre. Each member contributed a different item of food to the picnic such as: Salad Olivieh (an Iranian form of potato salad with chicken and gherkins), Kotlet (a lamb meat pattie), French bread, fruit and Iranian cakes.

Figure 33: Picnicking in Jesmond Dene Park, Newcastle for Sizdeh Bedar 2013





Figure 34: Performing the ritual of throwing my Sabzeh into the river

In accordance with tradition, before leaving the park we each threw our sabzeh in the river and thought about what we wanted to achieve in the forthcoming year. Before completing this final ritual of Nowruz Kaveh, Farzin and Souri explained the meaning behind it:

‘When you growing the sabzeh it is nothing, then after 3 or 4 days its starts to growing but after few weeks it is not that fresh, it’s not very nice now, it has to be fresh all the time so time to throw it away’ – Farzin.

‘On 13th day we put the sabzeh in the river as it is a sign of the all bad things is gone and start of the year and good things comes in the home. The river takes it away. The river is the symbol of the long life’ – Kaveh.

‘Life is continuing; the river is about the life moving forward’ – Souri.

It was at this point that Souri told me that in Iran, young women (around my age and younger) would take a piece of sabzeh and tie it in a knot before throwing it in the river whilst singing the following song:

Sizdeh bedar, (13th day)
Saale digar, (next year)
Khooneeh (house)
Shoohar (husband)
Ba’cheh baghal (holding baby in my arms)

Meaning by next Nowruz they hope to have married, have a home and a baby. I took this as a hint that in Iranian eyes I should maybe be settled down, married and having children by now, so I appeased them by partaking in the song as the only single woman in the group. Sadly, when the following Nowruz came around I was still single.

Performing and reconstructing these rituals in Newcastle is an example of how Iranians re-negotiate their identity within the in-betweens of culture, location and belonging. The rituals provide them with a connection to their idea of Iran as home, which then provides them with a sense of belonging in the UK. It is an Iranian cultural tradition transported and re-constructed to a new space, creating new means of negotiation and representation.

An Iranian Christmas in Newcastle

I have chosen to conclude this chapter of thematic analysis by presenting the way in which members of this Iranian community choose to celebrate the western tradition of Christmas. Although this celebration has long been dominated by commodification and consumer culture, it is a western tradition which stems from Christianity and the birth of Jesus Christ the son of God. However, Iranians do not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, they believe that he was a Prophet. Witnessing the Iranians celebrating Christmas within the diaspora demonstrates their embeddedness within the British Nation and their attempts to create a sense of home and belonging within the in-betweens of culture. It also ties in with the earlier section 'taking the good from cultures and leaving the bad'. This western tradition is celebrated within a third space in-between difference; in-between their notions of home in Iran and their desire to create a home in the UK. This in-betweenness is displayed perfectly in the figure thirty-eight below.



Figure 35: Performing British Islamic Iranian Identity. Christmas decorations in a British Islamic Iranian Household

The picture above is one of my favourite pictures from the entire research as it perfectly captures and displays the ways in which the members of this Iranian community live within the in-betweens of location, culture, identity and belonging. Within this figure we can see Christmas decorations positioned alongside framed quotations from the Qur'an and the MTO Shahmaghsoudi school of Islamic Sufism. Below are more pictures which show how Christmas decorations are positioned alongside objects of Persian material culture, such as Iranian style tables cloths. What was also interesting was how Souri's home was decorated with far more Christmas decorations than some of the English households I visited (including my own), with two Christmas trees. She also was one of the only households on her street where her Christmas decorations and celebrations were visible from outside.



Figure 36: Christmas decorations in Souri's home

When I asked Sourì why she celebrated Christmas she perfectly summed up the conclusion to this chapter:

'I celebrate the Christmas for two reasons. The first was because of my husband's children, my step children because they celebrate it and I like to prepare the house for them. The second reason is because I like it. I like to make the decoration for Christmas, I love it. I feel I belong to the Britain and it's my home, the England is my home and I live in here so I celebrate it' – *Sourì 2012, Third Wave Iranian Migrant.*

Concluding Remarks

The aim of the final thematic chapter 'Living in the In-betweens: Re-imagining Iran as home and the Performance of Identity' was to compliment and conclude the findings from the previous two chapters by visually demonstrating the members' orientations to home, and present the ways in which they remain connected to their idea of Iran as home whilst creating a home in Newcastle. It focussed on the ways in which these Iranian lived their everyday lives within the in-betweens of culture, location and belonging, forming something new in-between difference. This third space enables them to live as British Islamic Iranians, capturing the fluidity and hybridity of their identity as it is performed in the banal minutiae of everyday life.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Summary

In an attempt to understand how Iranians who have moved to Newcastle-upon-Tyne renegotiate their cultural identity in the UK, this thesis aimed to explore the tensions between identity, location, culture and belonging. According to Stock (2010) regardless of whether migrants are forced to leave, or choose to leave their homeland they experience a dislocation from their sense of self due to a loss of belonging. Iranians who have moved to the UK have moved away from everything that they believe defines who they are, to somewhere which is unfamiliar and strange. They no longer physically belong to Iran and the initially have no sense of belonging in the UK either. Furthermore, upon moving to the UK Iranians are confronted by *difference*. This ambivalence and loss of belonging reveals their split self. In order to renegotiate their cultural identity in this new, strange and unfamiliar place they turn to that which is familiar to remind them of who they are, and where they come from. According to Stock (2010) in order to feel a sense of home and belonging, migrants turn to their past memories and experiences of home to remind themselves of where they came from. The key word here is memories. Classic diaspora theory suggests that diasporas are created in the host land to keep the memory of their homeland alive because they can never return to it. However, more contemporary ideas of diaspora such as those by Avtar Brah, posit that not all homing desires are intrinsic to a return to the homeland, instead, orientation towards the origin or homeland centre could be symbolic, imagined, ritual or religious. Therefore, diasporas form as a means of connecting their memories of a past home, to their present home in order to feel a sense of belonging. As Gilroy (1993) indicates, belonging is simultaneously about roots (where we come from) and routes (where we are going). This thesis argues that Iranians (re)create roots by reimagining and reconstructing their idea of Iran as home in Newcastle, forming a diasporic space; an in-between space in which the tensions between identity, location, culture and belonging play out. Thus, once migrants establish a connection to their roots they are provided with a sense of belonging which enables them to renegotiate their

cultural identity and form routes into the host land society. Their cultural identity becomes renegotiated in the tensions between multiple cultures, multiple locations and multiple forms of belonging.

Peoples sense of belonging in diasporic contexts is forever in the making and emerges in constant interplay with the host cultures, as Avtar Brah's seminal work on diasporas reminds us. Making home anew, therefore is not just a matter of friendship and tolerance it is also one of friction and exclusion (Cohen, 2015).

For Brah (1996), diaspora as a concept should be used to historicise trajectories of different diasporas, mapping their relationality and what this search for origins tells us about the history of that particular diaspora. This includes how and why originary absolutes are imagined or continuously reimagined and remade. By focussing on what diaspora does rather than what it is, we can explore the individual experiences of the diasporans, as well as the ways in which they are constructing their diaspora.

Following Brah's perspective the aim of the thematic findings chapter was to present the trajectory of the diaspora through one continuous chronological narrative detailing its construction and how it has been reimagined and remade over time by those who live within it. By presenting the chapter in this way I was able to address the main objectives of the study:

- Understanding of home and where they consider home.
- Connections to their homeland and family that remain there.
- Whether there is a sentimental link to the homeland which aids their adaptation to the UK.
- To what extent Iranian culture, traditions and rituals are maintained whilst integrating into UK society.
- How identity is (re)negotiated in the UK.
- To where they feel a sense of belonging.
- To what extent Iranians feel embedded into the British nation.

By using biographical interviews, I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of my participants' life stories which included: their life in Iran, their decisions to leave, their process of migration and their re-settlement in the UK. The main finding was that although postmodern perceptions of diaspora demonstrate a significant move away from notions of essentialism and fixed identities, focussing instead on fluidity, hybridity and chaos; the story of this Iranian diaspora in Newcastle reveals that whilst Iranians acknowledge their cultural hybridity on the one hand, they also essentialise and fix their Iranian cultural identity/identity of the diaspora on the other. This finding is theoretically important because it contradicts contemporary conceptual understandings of diaspora and identity which distance themselves from essentialist and fixed origins.

In order to explore this finding I separated the thematic findings into three distinct chapters Chapter Five: 'Diaspora and the Search for Belonging', Chapter Six: 'Hybridity and the Third Space' and Chapter Seven: 'Living in the in-betweens'. Chapter five focussed on the way in which Iranians attempted to fix and essentialise the identity of the Iranian diaspora in order to provide themselves with a stable, coherent Iranian cultural identity which distances themselves from the image of Iran under the Islamic Republic. Once Iranians from the first wave realised that their stay in Newcastle was going to be on a permanent basis there became a desire to preserve, maintain and *recreate* aspects of Iranian culture, traditions, and rituals. A desire to remain connected to *their* essentialised idea of Iran as home, in order to create a sense of home and belonging in Newcastle.

I demonstrate that this diasporas orientation to Iran as home is a reimagined representation of the nostalgic years prior to the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. Using Freudian concepts of the split self, the stereotype and the fetish which I explore in chapter three, I argued that the essentialised Iranian diaspora is a stereotype which allows the first wave Iranians to deny the loss of their homeland (the fetish) in Newcastle. However, this is not a loss relating to their inability to return to the homeland in the classical diaspora sense, it is about the loss of their glorious Persian culture and history with the creation of the Islamic Republic. This is similar to the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles. According to Naficy (1993) this is known as syncretic re-

archization and is an attempt to invoke a period in one's history before it was contaminated by another. Iranians in diaspora re-create an *imagined* Iran which represents an idealised secular Iran lost in time and space (Anderson, 1992) based on the culture produced under the Persian Nationalism promoted by Reza Shah Pahlavi and his son Mohammad Shah Pahlavi. As discussed in the introductory chapter, in order to create a holistic national identity throughout his reign, Shah Reza Pahlavi linked his dynasty back to the founding of the pre-Islamic Achaemenid Empire led by King Cyrus (*Kurosh*) the Great, a time when the Persian Empire was at its greatest. As Anderson (1992) outlines, national identities place emphasis on origins and timelessness and these are represented through national histories, literature, symbols and rituals producing meanings about the nation with which we can then identify. However, when the Shah was deposed with the Iranian revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini founded the Islamic Republic of Iran, a new national identity and national culture was forged which centred on the arrival of Islam to Iran. The Iranians who migrated to Newcastle throughout the 1970s largely oppose the Islamic regime in Iran and do not identify with this image of Iran. In order to keep the memory of pre-Islamic Iran alive (the fetish), the diaspora as a stereotype continuously reinforces the fetish through collective memories, and rituals which then reinvent and transport Iran to a new space. I demonstrated this by outlining the ways in which Iran as home was reimagined, reconstructed and remembered through Persian material culture, and the maintenance of Persian culture, tradition and ritual whilst living in Newcastle.

This nostalgic representation of a pre-Islamic Iran echoes the conflict for authenticity which has plagued Iranian society since the Arab Invasion in 660AD. Outlined by Kantouzian (2009) in the introduction whenever the state of Iran was identified with Islam and traditionalism, Iranian society identified itself with a re-invented modern concept of pre-Islamic Persia; and whenever the state assumed the latter identity, society looked to Islam and Shia traditions. The Iranian diaspora in Newcastle is a representation of this homeland conflict, the current state of Iran identifies with Islam, whilst the diaspora identifies itself with a pre-Islamic Persian Identity. Furthermore, although it was not explicitly stated by any of my participants, it is important to consider that at the time of the diasporas construction, the relationship between Iran and the west was extremely tenuous, and the media were not portraying Iran in a

favourable light. For example, after the fallout from the Iranian revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Iran severed ties with America for harbouring the former Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. This conflict was then exacerbated by the American embassy hostage crisis where over sixty American diplomats were held captive in Iran for 444 days. Throughout this time Iran was considered in the same light as terrorists, therefore the need for Iranians in the Newcastle diaspora to identify themselves with pre-Islamic Iran may also be influenced by western medias portrayal of their homeland. This need to construct the diaspora as an essentialist re-imagined representation of pre-Islamic Iran as home enables them to maintain a stable, 'whole' cultural Iranian identity which is separate from the Islamic Republic.

Brah (1996) notes that all diasporas are differentiated heterogeneous contested spaces, even if they are constructed as a common 'we', because this 'we' is usually constructed in opposition to an 'other'. Within this Iranian diaspora this 'we' is achieved by placing themselves in opposition to Iranians living under the Islamic republic of Iran. Constructing the 'other' in a stereotypical way creates the fantasy of a coherent identity of which you have complete control. However, this is what Freud and Lacan refer to as a fantasy of wholeness. With the arrival of further waves of Iranian migrants, namely Khomeini's Kids, the first waves fixed 'stable' identity was confronted because the image of 'Iranianess' mirrored back to them by the later waves of Iranian migrants conflicted with their own self -image of 'Iranianess', revealing their split self. Within chapter five I provided various quotes from first wave Iranians who describe the 'new generation' as liars, poorly educated and disrespectful people, who ruined the already established Iranian community because of their different 'mentality'.

The next main finding within my thesis refers to the intergenerational conflict which caused the once perceived cohesive and homogenous diaspora to fragment into smaller sub-communities based on differing loyalties and friendship groups. As stated in chapter five, intergenerational conflict is not uncommon within diaspora studies and has been noted in other Iranian diasporas. McAuliffe (2006) noted intergenerational conflicts which were reproduced class systems from prior to the Iranian Revolution. Initially, I thought the intergenerational conflict within the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle mirrored that of McAuliffe's findings, however, whilst

there were strong elements of class distinction I felt that the conflict ran much deeper. Once first wave, and accepted third wave Iranians began talking about the 'mentality' of those later identified as Khomeini's Kids it became apparent that growing up under differing and conflicting political cultures played the dominant role within this intergenerational conflict. The notion of political culture again relates back to the ways in which the diaspora in Newcastle was formed in connection with their ideas of Iran as home; a nostalgic imagined representation of pre-Islamic Iran. Khomeini's kids represent an Iran which the diaspora has tried to distance itself from. Within the biographical interviews Khomeini's kids were described as 'liars, cheats, drug users and runaways', again, constructing the 'other' in a stereotypical way creates the fantasy of a coherent authentic Iranian cultural identity. It is these tensions around authentic Iranian identity, political culture and understandings of Iran as home which I argue have led to the *fragmentation* of this once perceived 'cohesive' Iranian community into a variety of smaller social cliques, with differing loyalties and friendships. This brings me to thematic chapter seven: 'Hybridity and the Third Space: Renegotiating Identity within the In-betweens'.

Within this chapter I attempted to show how even though Iranians within the Newcastle diaspora attempted to essentialise their Iranian cultural identity in order to distance themselves from the Islamic Republic of Iran, they also acknowledge their hybridity and see themselves as a cosmopolitan people who can easily adapt to cultures due to their Persian cultural history (see story about the Parsis). This is what Bhabha refers to as the dual nature of culture, migrants are always situated in relation to both an original culture and a new location, between metaphor and 'reality' (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha argues hybridisation exists no matter whether you keep on asserting the purity of your own doctrines (Bhabha, 1990). Throughout this chapter I demonstrate that this Iranian diasporic community is not only a nostalgic representation of a pre-revolutionary Iran, or a reminder of their roots. It is also a representation of their routes, and where they are going in British society. It is a space where multiple cultures and identities intersect creating something new 'in-between' difference, a space of hybridity which Bhabha terms the 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994). The diaspora as a

third space was constructed in the tensions between their reimagined idea of Iran as home and their desire to create a home in the UK.

Although I briefly re-discuss how the diaspora was actually constructed in the in-betweens of culture, location and belonging, the majority of this chapter was dedicated to outlining how a fragment of this diaspora reproduced itself anew following the fragmentation of the once perceived cohesive community. In order to re-establish the stereotype of the diaspora which represents the fetishisation of their imagined idea of Iran as home, new searches and spaces of a sense of belonging opened up and this coincided with the arrival of the Maktab Tarighat Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism to the region in the late 1990s. In the search for a sense of belonging its current members were drawn to its promotion of 'self-realisation' and 'personal fulfilment', as well as its Persian centrality. Furthermore, its maintenance of Persian culture, tradition and rituals tied in with, and reinforced their need to re-imagine pre-Islamic Iran as home on a global scale.

This brings me to another main finding within this thesis, that the MTO Shahmaghsoudi is a third space which allows multiple identities to intersect, forming new spaces of belonging, negotiation and meaning which cuts across the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, enabling its members to live as British *Islamic* Iranians in the UK. Although the Iranian diaspora was originally founded on pre-Islamic re-imaginings of Iran as home, and have made significant steps to distance themselves from the Islamic republic and its doctrines of Islam, the fragment of the Newcastle diaspora which I have researched, demonstrate a *return* to Islam. This is because the Maktab promotes a form of Shia Islam that completely distances itself from the doctrines of Islam practised in Iran. Furthermore, it reinforces their re-imagined fetishized image of Iran as home through its references to Persian nationalism, and encourages the maintenance of Iranian culture, tradition and ritual. Like those living in the diaspora, the MTO Shahmaghsoudi is constructed in opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, thus providing a space which combines an Islamic identity that fits in with their authentic Iranian cultural identity and Persian nationalism, rather than placing them in opposition.

The aim of the final thematic chapter 'Living in the In-betweens: Re-imagining Iran as home and the Performance of Identity' was to compliment and conclude the findings from the previous two thematic chapters by visually demonstrating the members' orientations to home, and present the ways in which they remain connected to their idea of Iran as home whilst creating a home in Newcastle. It focussed on the ways in which these Iranian lived their everyday lives within the in-betweens of culture, location and belonging, capturing the fluidity and hybridity of their identity as it is performed in the banal minutiae of everyday life.

Situating the Study: Empirical and Theoretical Significance

The findings from this study outlined above provide contrasting ideas of diasporic consciousness. In contemporary conceptual understandings, diasporic identity is seen to be in flux. Identities are fluid, decentred and complex; something that is constantly reconstructed and renegotiated in movement through time, context and space, forming something hybrid. Therefore, conceptually, the terms diaspora and identity have moved away from fixed, unified and essentialist notions of self and origin. My findings from the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle pose a problem for contemporary understandings of diaspora and identity because Iranians within this community embrace and accept their hybridity on the one hand, but fix and essentialise their Iranian cultural identity on the other. They pride themselves on being able to take the good in all cultures and amalgamate them with their Iranian cultural identity, yet this is juxtaposed by their need to fix their Iranian cultural identity in a pre-Islamic past, to distance themselves from the Islamic republic.

According to contemporary understandings of diaspora you cannot have a stable unified identity that is at the same time, fluid and heterogeneous. Yet this is how they narrated their identity. This led me to question whether diaspora was a useful conceptual tool to use in my analysis. I started to wonder whether Brubaker (2004) was correct in his thinking that the dispersion of the meanings associated with diaspora as a concept has stretched it to the point of uselessness. Has it lost its ability to pick out phenomena? My answer is no; it has not lost its ability to pick out phenomena. In order to understand the complexity of identity renegotiation in the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle, we have to look deeper into the post-

modern diaspora conceptual framework, to its post-colonial and psychoanalytical origins. It is only through the added application of psychoanalytical concepts such as the split self, imaginary, mirror stage, fetish, stereotype and ambivalence, that we can fully understand the processes involved in the first wave migrants' diasporic (re)imaginings of pre-Islamic Iran. Furthermore, this form of analysis is not only limited to this particular fragment of the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle. This adds to this thesis' originality as to my understanding, it is the only study to situate diaspora within the lens of post-colonial and psychoanalytical concepts of identity, and observe the Iranian diaspora through the lens of the 'in-betweens' and 'third space'.

Although the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was one of the focal reasons for the upheaval of Iranians from their homeland, the existence of an Iranian Diaspora has only really surfaced in the literature within the last fifteen years. Therefore, it is a relatively young diaspora when compared to the Armenian diaspora in terms of research. This literature is typically dominated by studies taking place in America, more specifically Los Angeles which is believed to house the largest concentration of Iranians living outside of Iran. However, prominent work has also taken place with the Netherlands (Ghorashi, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009), Sweden (Graham and Khosravi, 1997; Lewin, 2001), Australia, Canada (McAuliffe, 2007) and the UK (Spellman, 2004; Sreberny, 2001; McAuliffe, 2007; Gholami, 2015). Such literature reflects the work within the wider field of diaspora focussing on dispersal, flight from 'home', the formation of new communities, maintenance of transnational networks and identity (re)construction (Sullivan, 2001; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2013; Graham and Khosravi, Ghorashi, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2011). Most of the research taking place within the UK has concentrated on Iranians living within the capital city of London, which holds the largest population of Iranians in Britain. This thesis also adds to these areas, complimenting this existing research by providing the first in-depth account of a localised Iranian community residing in a post-industrial town in the North East of England, whilst also adding new insights and areas for exploration. It adds an important contribution to the existing literature because most studies on the Iranian diaspora thus far have centred on those living within large metropolitan spaces which are typically associated with diversity and multiculturalism. None have considered the experiences of

constructing an Iranian diasporic community within a post-industrial town that is historically and culturally white working class. Gateshead is not typically contextualised as a multicultural space, but this research indicates (within chapter five) that within the heart of Gateshead is an array of different cultures living side by side, including Polish, Kurdish, Pakistani, Jewish, Iranian and Geordie to name but a few. It is for this reason that I would like to follow this study up with 'Street Ethnography' of Coatsworth road in Gateshead. As mentioned in chapter five this road is jam packed with an array of different shops catering to multiple ethnicities at once. There are Asian food stores next to Jewish kosher bakeries, Kurdish bread shops which are housed alongside Geordie Cafés (Greasy Spoon), with hairdressers run by Turkish owners next to mobile repair stores ran by Pakistani owners. Customers of all walks of life line this street on a daily basis, intersecting through the banalities of their everyday needs. Completing an ethnography of this street would allow me to observe these interactions and see how (or whether) a variety of cultures live side by side, within this predominantly white working class post-industrial town. Given the striking results of the EU Referendum and the support from the white working class for Britain to leave, this is a pivotal time to consider such a study, when migration, asylum and refugees are hot topics in today's media and government agendas.

Furthermore, previous research on the Iranian diaspora has also had the tendency to focus on those who were exiled from Iran because of the Iranian Revolution, therefore those who left Iran within the second wave of migration between 1979 and 1995. It is estimated that one million people left Iran in the years following the Iranian revolution, with 500,000 leaving by the end of 1979 (International Organisation of Migration). Whilst this wave included Iranians who were: a) associated with the Shah's regime in Iran, namely the 'royalists' who were generally considered to be professionals, entrepreneurs and academics from middle to upper class backgrounds; b) those who left due to persecution they endured as a result of the revolution, and c) young men avoiding military service/the war or young women escaping confining gender constrictions, there seems to have been a focus on those who were politically active throughout the revolution and exiled from their homeland due to fear of persecution. Contrary to the previous literature on the Iranian diaspora, within my research I only met one Iranian who left Iran throughout the second wave of migration. Therefore, this study presented a new

opportunity to focus on those who temporarily left Iran throughout 1970s for education and chose not to return to Iran due to the implementation of the Islamic Republic. As well as those who chose to leave Iran post 1995 as economic migrants in search for better opportunities.

Typically the Iranian diaspora has been characterised by themes of loss, trauma and exilic longing due to the turmoil of the revolution and displacement of millions of Iranians (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2013) which is similar to the classic diaspora literature on Jewish exiles, however unlike the Jewish diaspora this study demonstrates that this theme of loss is not dominated by an exilic longing to return to Iran, but rather the desire to keep the memory of their Persian history and culture alive in a new space. Whilst there are similarities between this diaspora and the classic notion of diasporas such as the Jewish, this diaspora can also be contextualised within the era of globalisation in which the flux, fluidity and movement of populations has had a profound shift on how we conceptualise and understand cultural identity. Throughout the thematic chapters I have followed Avtar Brah's re-appropriation of migrant's relationship to their homeland through a homing desire, rather than a desire to return. I have also followed her use of the diaspora concept as a heuristic device that aims to provide a historical genealogy that traces the trajectory of the diaspora from its construction up to its present form; documenting the ways in which it has reproduced itself anew.

As I have reiterated many times within this thesis, this diaspora in Newcastle bares striking similarities to the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles, known as Tehrangeles, namely the attempt to invoke a period in one's history before it was contaminated by another (Naficy, 1993). This is referred to syncretic re-archization and is similar to findings by Morley and Robins (1995) who demonstrated how Germans who had lost their homeland national identity due to Nazism, turned to their culture language and dialect for a sense of belonging to their homeland. In relation to the Iranian diaspora, it is a way for Iranians (living outside of Iran) to (re)construct their identity through an Iranian past that revitalises either the pre-Islamic time or the pre-revolution period. In other words, Iranians in diaspora re-create an *imagined* Iran which represented an idealised secular Iran lost in time and space (Anderson, 1992). Naficy (1994) observed this glorification of pre-Islamic Persian through popular culture and televisual

productions. It is reproduced on a macro scale as for those Iranians who were brought up during the reign of the Shah, Irangeles feels *more* like Iran than the Islamic Iran after the revolution (Ghorashi, 2005). Therefore, Irangeles could be construed as an example of what Jean Baudrillard determines as hyper reality. Within the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle this identification is evident on a micro scale, through the way in which they articulate their Iranian cultural identity and the banality of their everyday life. This is demonstrated within chapter seven through Persian material culture, hosting and hospitality, as well as Persian tradition and ritual.

This thesis also echoes findings from Graham and Khosravi's (1997) study on Iranian employment within the host country, namely the finding that although Iranians are generally well educated (often to a higher degree level) the vast majority cannot find employment within their area of study or speciality. For example, within this thesis I demonstrated that Iranians who were educated in engineering in the UK found it difficult to find employment once their studies had finished and ended up opening businesses within the Takeaway trade. This mirrors findings by Harbottle (2001) who studied Iranians within the Midlands throughout the 1990s. Furthermore, the same finding applies to those arriving in Newcastle throughout the third wave who, for example, owned their own company within Iran and had over ten years of experience working as civil engineers. Furthermore, I have witnessed this trend within Stoke-on-Trent. Throughout my time of living in the Stoke-on-Trent area I have had the opportunity to meet several Iranians who have confirmed that a significant portion of men within their Iranian community also own or work within the Takeaway trade. Therefore, this highlights a more significant problem of inequality within British Society and can be related to the wider research outlining the experiences of Asylum Seekers and Refugee Status. A seminal piece of research currently taking place within the topic of asylum seekers and work is the ESRC funded project headed by Dr Lucy Mayblin investigating asylum seekers' rights to take paid employment. Over the last few years there has been an increasing amount of UK media coverage barraging asylum seekers and refugees as scroungers who come to the UK to solely live off benefits. However, as Dr Mayblin suggests on the research projects' website www.asylumwelfarework.com many studies indicate that asylum seekers wish to work straight

away. However, government policy indicates they can only apply for the right to work after waiting 12 months for an initial decision on their asylum application. Therefore, for 12 months they are forced to live off government benefits, which they are then stigmatised for by the UK media. This welfare is typically below the poverty line and unsurprisingly many asylum seekers end up seeking informal work in the shadow economy, opening themselves up to exploitation and precarious situations. In light of my findings and research currently being conducted by Mayblin I would like to complete further investigations within the area of Iranians, Asylum, Welfare and Work.

This thesis also contributes towards the body of literature on intergenerational or internal conflict within diaspora studies. Intergenerational or internal conflict is not uncommon within diaspora studies. Both Khachig Toloyan and Pnina Werbner have discussed similar tensions around authenticity within an Armenian diaspora and a South Asian diaspora in Manchester. However, whilst Werbner (2002) found that internal conflicts could be 'forgotten' albeit temporarily when rallying to support the homeland, such a public identity does not exist for the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne. The Iranian diaspora in Newcastle is almost like a silent community, as unless you were part of the community you wouldn't really know that an Iranian community existed. Previous research on the Iranian diaspora have highlighted the existence of internal conflicts but these have centred on class distinctions or religious distinctions. For example, as discussed in the thematic analysis chapter, McAuliffe identified that class distinctions from pre-revolutionary Iran were often reproduced within the host land. Whilst strong class distinctions were clearly visible within this Iranian diaspora in Newcastle, these were superseded by the clashes and divisions caused by growing up under differing political cultures. This is currently no research on the Iranian diaspora which addresses this issue, therefore adding a significant contribution to understanding Iranian experiences in diaspora. From some informal conversations with Iranians living in Stoke-on-Trent, Sheffield and Leeds it appears the same tensions exist within diasporic communities there, however further research would need to be conducted in order to confirm this finding.

Challenges Arising from Recruitment Process and Aims for Future Research

Two challenges arose within the recruitment process of this study which have prevented me from providing a more rounded picture of the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle. The first is the fact that I struggled to recruit women to take part in the study, therefore at times it does come across as though this research is mainly from a male perspective. However, this is because unintentionally my research presented a public/private divide which replicates the patriarchal society and gender roles found in Iran. Men dominate the public sphere and women dominate the private sphere. As chapter five details the construction of the diaspora within Newcastle's public sphere, this section is dominated by the stories of Iranian men. Furthermore, the vast majority of Iranians arriving within the first wave of migration were males coming to the west for education. Chapter Seven detailed the everyday lived experiences of Iranians and focussed primarily on the home environment and how Iran as home was reimagined within Newcastle homes. Therefore, this section was predominantly from a female perspective. As the curators of Persian culture, tradition and ritual, Iranian women can be seen as the backbone to the survival of the Iranian diaspora in Newcastle, therefore they hold a very prominent position within this community. In future research I would like to provide a more focussed study on the women who live within this diaspora both Iranian women and women from other ethnic backgrounds who have married Iranian men. This will provide me with the opportunity to produce a more comprehensive understanding on the ways in which they renegotiate their cultural identity within the private sphere.

Another group of people I would like to have interviewed within the Iranian diaspora are those who were labelled as Khomeini's Kids. As stated within my thesis these Iranians were extremely difficult to locate empirically and as stated within the methodological implications I was often steered towards a certain type of Iranian by my gatekeepers. If I were to do this research again I would make a much more vigorous attempt to locate Iranians who could be classified as Khomeini's kids in order to provide a more rounded analysis which detailed the multiple sides to the Iranian diaspora story. As one of the most prominent findings within this research related to the intergenerational conflict of political culture between earlier waves and

Khomeini's kids. Completing a follow up study focussing on the lived experience of those classified as Khomeini's kids hold my priority on my research agenda.

My Position within the Research

As this research began by discussing my position within the Iranian community it seems only fitting that I should end the conclusion by revisiting it once again. This thesis has been a life altering process for me in many ways. It has not only kick started an academic career which I love, but it has also provided me with an opportunity to learn more about my heritage and Iranian culture in the last four years, than I have within the previous twenty-five years of my life. As discussed within the methodology the Iranian side of my life has always remained on the periphery, or at least it felt that way. It was never fully ingrained into my life; it was like a coat I put on sometimes. Whilst it is still not fully engrained in my life, and potentially never will be I have a far deeper understanding of the way in which it has influenced who I have become today.

Due to my position within this diaspora I was provided with a unique position to study an unrepresented cultural community with many of the members stating how they would not have taken part in the study had they not known me since I was a little girl. Whilst this presented many opportunities it was not without its complications, most notable was the internal conflict I felt about my wavering position within the community. Throughout the study I was incredible aware of my 'two-ness' as Du Bois notes or my 'doubling' according to Bhabha. Initially I set out to embody the role of an Iranian woman in the community, however I found this extremely difficult to do as it conflicted with my own sense of self. I wanted to be like them but I also wanted to be myself and be accepted for who I was, on my own terms. Through reflection my own renegotiations in the field mirrored that of my participants as we all tried to find our place within the in-betweens.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Approval from Keele University Ethics Committee

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms



RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES

14 February 2012

Natalie Soleiman
Resident Tutor Flat
D Block
Honwood Hall
Keele University

Dear Natalie

Re: 'An Ethnography of the Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne'

Thank you for submitting your revised project for review.

I am pleased to inform you that your project has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel.

If the fieldwork goes beyond the date stated in your application (19 March 2013) you must notify the Ethical Review Panel via Michele Dawson.

If there are any other amendments to your study you must submit an 'application to amend study' form to Michele Dawson. This form is available from Michele (01782 733588) or via <http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchethics/>

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Michele Dawson in writing to m.dawson@uso.keele.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

PP Dr Nicky Edelstyn
Chair – Ethical Review Panel

CC RI Manager, Supervisor

Information Sheet

(For event gatekeeper)

Study Title: *An Ethnography of an Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne.*

Aims of the Research

This project aims to provide a case study of the members of an Iranian community in Newcastle upon Tyne. It intends to explore their lifestyle and experiences whilst they lived in Iran and their experiences since living in Newcastle upon Tyne. It is also interested in their decisions for leaving Iran, their process of migration and contact with Iran since leaving. It is particularly interested in their ideas of home and belonging and to what extent Iranian culture, rituals & traditions are maintained whilst integrating into UK society.

Invitation

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study '*An Ethnography of an Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne*'. This project is being undertaken by *Natalie Soleiman*.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are a member of the Iranian community in Newcastle upon Tyne. Furthermore, you have previously lived in Iran and have experienced the processes of migration, as well as the processes of resettlement. In addition you are currently organising an event which I would like to attend as part of my research.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms. You keep one copy of the form and the other copy is for my records. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part, as the organiser of the event you are consenting to the researcher accompanying you and other members of the Iranian community to the event which you are arranging.

If I take part, what do I have to do?

If you take part in this study you will be participating in an ethnographic study. This will involve the researcher accompanying you to the event which you are organising in order to experience the natural activities of the Iranian community. In doing so, the researcher will be able to gain an understanding of how Iranians live their life in the UK, whilst maintaining their Iranian culture and traditions.

In light of this, prior to the event, it is advised that you tell the people you are inviting, that the researcher will be present.

What are the benefits of taking part?

In taking part you will be able to inform a piece of research designed to help understand the various experiences of Iranians who have migrated from Iran and settled in the UK.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part?

You may find that some people may not want to attend your event due to my presence.

How will information about me be used?

Data will be collected in various forms. Whilst attending your event the researcher may keep a research diary consisting of various notes from their observations. There is also the possible use of visual methods e.g. the researcher may ask if they can take photographs at your event. This data will then be used to answer questions posed in their PhD thesis on the Iranian diaspora. There is a possibility that the data from these interviews will be retained for use in future studies.

Who will have access to information about me?

- The data collected for this study will only be accessed by the researcher Natalie Soleiman and her supervisor Siobhan Holohan.
- Information on you will be kept confidential and anonymous. This means that the researcher will protect your identity as a participant by ensuring that you remain unidentifiable in the research. As stated above, the only people who will have access to the personal information you discuss in this study, is Natalie Soleiman and her supervisor Siobhan Holohan. The information you provide will not be disclosed to any third party e.g. other members of the Iranian community. When discussed in the research you will be given a pseudonym (a false name) so that you remain unidentifiable.
- In accordance with Keele University guidelines, the data from this study will be retained and securely stored by the principal investigator - Natalie Soleiman for five years. After this period of storage, the data will be securely destroyed.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact *Natalie Soleiman* on n.m.soleiman@keele.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you do not wish to speak to the researcher directly, you can contact their supervisor *Siobhan Holohan* at s.holohan@keele.ac.uk.

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:-

Nicola Leighton
Research Governance Officer
Research & Enterprise Services
Dorothy Hodgkin Building
Keele University
ST5 5BG
E-mail: n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk
Tel: 01782 733306

Contact for further information

Natalie Soleiman

Email Address: n.m.soleiman@keele.ac.uk

Supervisor: *Siobhan Holohan*

Email Address: s.holohan@keele.ac.uk

CONSENT FORM – Gatekeeper (this will be on letter headed paper)

(For participation)

Title of Project: *An Ethnography of an Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne.*

Name of Principal Investigator: *Natalie Soleiman*

Please tick box if your answer is 'Yes'

- 1 I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
- 2 I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time. ☐
- 3 I agree to take part in this study. ☐
- 4 I consent to the researcher being present at my event. ☐
- 5 Prior to my event, I agree to inform those attending that the researcher will also be present. ☐
- 6 I understand that data collected on members of the Iranian community during this study will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication. ☐
- 7 I allow the researcher to take photographs at my event. ☐
- 8 I allow the researcher to use these photographs in their research. ☐
- 9 I agree to allow the data collected to be used for future research projects. ☐
- 10 I agree to be contacted about possible participation in future research projects. ☐

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Information Sheet - For Interviewees

Study Title: *Ethnography of an Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne.*

Aims of the Research

This project aims to provide a case study of the members of an Iranian community in Newcastle upon Tyne. It intends to explore their lifestyle and experiences whilst they lived in Iran and their experiences since living in Newcastle upon Tyne. It is also interested in their decisions for leaving Iran, their process of migration and contact with Iran since leaving. It is particularly interested in their ideas of home and belonging and to what extent Iranian culture, rituals & traditions are maintained whilst integrating into UK society.

Invitation

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study '*Ethnography of an Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne*'. This project is being undertaken by *Natalie Soleiman*.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are a member of the Iranian community in Newcastle upon Tyne. Furthermore, you have previously lived in Iran and have experienced the processes of migration, as well as the processes of resettlement.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms. You keep one copy of the form and the other copy is for my records. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

What will happen if I take part?

If you take part in this study you will be participating in a one to one interview with the researcher at your home. The interview may last up to 120 minutes and there may be a possibility you will be asked to come back for a second interview. Whether you wish to come back for a second interview is entirely your choice.

If I take part, what do I have to do?

You will also be asked to engage in conversational interviews discussing topics concerning your life in Iran, experiences whilst living in the UK, your Iranian culture and traditions and your family (both in Iran and UK). Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. There is also the possibility that the researcher will ask permission to take photographs of your home e.g. of its decoration or of particular objects.

What are the benefits of taking part?

In taking part you will be able to inform a piece of research designed to help understand the various experiences of Iranians who have migrated from Iran and settled in the UK.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part?

You may be asked to recall memories which could potentially be upsetting; however you will not be expected to divulge detailed, potentially sensitive or distressing information. You may decline to talk about any aspect you feel uncomfortable with. If you were to become upset due to the recollection of such memories, the researcher can provide information on groups who can be contacted to help discuss these issues. Furthermore, contact details for the researcher and their supervisor are included on this information sheet.

How will information about me be used?

Data will be collected in various forms. Interviews will be recorded on audiotape/dictaphone before being transcribed. Once transcription has occurred the recording on the dictaphone will be deleted to prevent unauthorised access by others. There is also the possible use of visual methods e.g. the researcher may ask to take photographs of your home and objects within your home. This data will then be used to answer questions posed in their PhD thesis on the Iranian diaspora. There is a possibility that the data from these interviews will be retained for use in future studies.

Who will have access to information about me?

- The data collected for this study will only be accessed by the researcher Natalie Soleiman and her supervisor Siobhan Holohan.
- Transcribed interviews will be stored securely in password protected files on a password protected computer. Any hard copies of data will be secured in a locked filing cabinet.
- Information on you will be kept confidential and anonymous. This means that the researcher will protect your identity as a participant by ensuring that you remain unidentifiable in the research. As stated above, the only people who will have access to the personal information you discuss in this study, is Natalie Soleiman and her supervisor Siobhan Holohan. The information you provide will not be disclosed to any third party e.g. other members of the Iranian community. When discussed in the research (e.g. quotes) you will be given a pseudonym (a false name) so that you remain unidentifiable.
- In accordance with Keele University guidelines, the data from this study will be retained and securely stored by the principal investigator - Natalie Soleiman for five years. After this period of storage, the data will be securely destroyed.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact *Natalie Soleiman* on n.m.soleiman@keele.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you do not wish to speak to the researcher directly, you can contact their supervisor *Siobhan Holohan* at s.holohan@keele.ac.uk.

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:-

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Contact for further information

Natalie Soleiman

Email Address: n.m.soleiman@keele.ac.uk

Supervisor: *Siobhan Holohan*

Email Address: s.holohan@keele.ac.uk

CONSENT FORM – For Interviewees

Title of Project: *Ethnography of an Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne.*

Name of Principal Investigator: *Natalie Soleiman*

Please tick box if your answer is 'Yes'

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| 1 | I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | I agree to take part in this study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | I understand that data collected about me during this study will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | I agree to the interview being audio taped. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 | I allow photographs to be taken. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | I agree to allow the data collected to be used for future research projects. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 | I agree to be contacted about possible participation in future research projects. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

CONSENT FORM – For Interviewees

(For use of quotes and photographs in the research)

Title of Project: *Ethnography of an Iranian Diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne.*

Name of Principal Investigator: *Natalie Soleiman*

Please tick box if your answer is 'Yes'

- 1 I am happy for any quotes to be used ☐
- 2 I do not want any quotes to be used ☐
- 3 I am happy for photographs to be used ☐
- 4 I do not want photographs to be used ☐

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature